

This is Good News



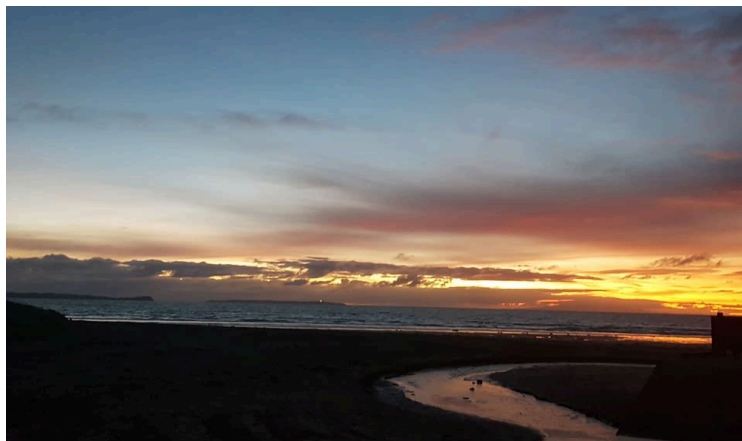
The story we live inside

Lent 2025

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WAIAPU

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My hope is that through these reflections you may greet the Easter Dawn with a new sense of the love God has for you and for all the world, and a new sense of the good news that we can share.

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1 Welcome

Welcome to this study

This study has been designed for two different contexts: groups meeting in parishes or other ministry units (for example, schools or workplaces), or people on their own to do at home. You might want to do it as a family.



There are passages from the Bible to look at and questions to think about. Listen to the responses that others give, and rejoice in the diversity of views and experiences – one of the delights (and occasional difficulties) of church communities is that we can be so different from one another, and yet come together to worship, pray, and work, serving the communities around us.

There are six studies, which correspond to the six weeks of Lent. Each of these engages with some aspect of the good news story that we, as Christians, are part of – the story in which we live.

- 1 God is good news
- 2 Jesus is good news
- 3 Belonging to the “good news people”
- 4 Spreading the good news
- 5 Good news for young and old
- 6 Good news for Aotearoa

Welcome to Lent



Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to Easter. It begins on **Ash Wednesday**, when we’re invited to receive on our foreheads a cross in ashes as we make up our minds to put aside the sins and failures of the past and seek a new beginning with God. The ash is made from the burnt palm crosses of the year before. Ash Wednesday services include these words:

“We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes, an ancient sign, speaking of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marking the penitence of the community as a whole.”

“Dust you are, and to dust you shall return. Turn from sin and be faithful to the gospel.”

Ash Wednesday helps us face up to our own mortality – all of us will die one day. We’re encouraged to reflect on the love and freedom Christ offers to us, and the knowledge that Christ has defeated death. When someone dies “in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (to quote the Funeral Service) we believe they’re born to a new life, with Christ who is alive forever.

So ashes are a sign of a new beginning – and who doesn’t love a chance to start afresh! Ash Wednesday, and Lent as a whole, is thus good news because it’s an opportunity to put the mistakes and faults of the past behind us and start out again in our walk with God and with one another. We all know we’re not perfect:

we do things that are wrong and hurt other people in the process – in other words, we sin. Lent is a time of hope because through it we remember that God is always holding out to us the possibility of a new beginning.



Keeping Lent

Lent is traditionally a time for fasting, almsgiving (giving money or other things to those in need), and self-denial. Often people talk about “giving things up for Lent,” but you might want to “take something up” instead – perhaps a different prayer practice, reading the Bible in a new way, or volunteering with a service group. Think of it as an opportunity to try a new way of living. Some questions to ask:

- ❖ ***How do I want to be different, when Easter comes?***
- ❖ ***How do we, in this faith community, want to be different when Easter comes?***
- ❖ ***How do we want the world to be different, when Easter comes?***

A useful reminder: Lent is 40 days, but if you count up the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter there are 46 days – how does that work? The Sundays aren't fast days – and that means that whatever you give up for Lent, you can do or have on a Sunday.



A text for Ash Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

‘At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.’

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

This passage includes a call to reconciliation. We're invited – at every time, but particularly in Lent – to be reconciled with God. In the verses just before this, Paul describes how God has reconciled us through Christ. Our reconciliation to God has come about through what God, in Christ, has done: although the relationship between God and humanity was broken from the human side, God initiates the process of making things right again.

Paul asks the Corinthians to be reconciled to God, and therefore to accept the call to be “ambassadors for Christ,” entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation, labouring together with Paul and others. It’s a reminder that Lent is a communal journey in which each Christian joins with others in working for reconciliation.



Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8, which echoes God’s listening to and helping the ancient Israelites in their time of difficulty. He uses this to announce that – just as in the past – God’s “day of salvation” and “acceptable time” is always “now,” in this very moment.

Paul describes his experiences, making it clear that serving God can take you anywhere, from beatings to genuine love. He writes about things that have happened to him (affliction, hardships), what others have done to him (beatings, imprisonments) and how that affected him (sleepless nights, hunger). And yet there are consolations: purity, patience, and kindness, genuine love, and the power of God.

- ❖ ***What might being an “ambassador for Christ” look like in practice, in your daily life?***
- ❖ ***Where is reconciliation needed today?***
- ❖ ***How might your community work for reconciliation?***
- ❖ ***What difficulties and consolations have you experienced in following Christ?***

Welcome to this theme *This is Good News*

The idea for this study comes from a sense that most of us are flooded with “bad news” – whether via TV, radio or social media. Whether it’s wars (several of them in various parts of the world), the economy, job cuts, or the housing crisis, if we’re not careful we can get ground down by it all or give in to the sort of negativity where it feels like “same old, same old” on permanent repeat. This study is a counter to all that. It reminds us of the good news that’s at the heart of our faith, and of our own calling to be people of good news.



The word “gospel” (*evangelion* in the Greek of the New Testament) means “good news.” That’s the story we’re invited to live into and to be carriers of: the good news of God, of Jesus, the good news of the Church. We are gospel people, the people of good news, and we have this message to share with our whānau, our friends and neighbours, and with the world all around us – but it’s hard to share it if we can’t see it for ourselves. So welcome to the good news!

❖ ***What’s your initial reaction to this? Does it excite you?***

❖ ***Where do we – and where does our world – most need good news at this time?***

God is good news

The simplest and most basic statement of who God is comes in one of the New Testament letters: God is love (1 John 4:16). God loves us and wants to be in a relationship with us. Both Testaments of the Bible expand on that basic truth. In the Old Testament, God calls a people to relate to with the covenant statement “I will be your God and you will be my people.” Over and over we see the people forgetting this, sinking into a rut, and drifting away; over and over we see God coming after them. Through one of the prophets God says,

“Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.” (Isaiah 49: 15-16)

However frustrated God might get when the people do something stupid, God never stops loving them. We see the same thing in the New Testament (more on that in the next session).



Photo: Max Andrey, Unsplash

From the very beginning God created the world as an expression of love. Creation is an act of God’s goodness reaching out beyond itself. God created, not because God needed to (God, after all, is self-sufficient), but because this reaching out, this desire to be in relationship with the world and its people, is part of who God is. Seeing creation as an act of goodness reaching

out beyond itself means that behind everything that exists is a deep-seated generosity. This can help us be grateful for the gifts and the bounty of the natural world, for clean water, wind energy, the beauty of nature. Seeing these things as “gift” and not as something to which we’re entitled can inspire us toward greater efforts to celebrate and protect them. And God’s generosity, which underlies the world we live in, can encourage us to share ourselves and what we have with others, to reach out to others as God has reached out to us. Which is good news for us and for those around us.

The goodness of God’s creation is worth pondering some more. Centuries ago, Augustine of Hippo wrote that the universe was created because of “God’s good purpose to create good.”

- ❖ ***How is the goodness of creation good news for the world? What might this mean in practice?***
- ❖ ***God never stops wanting to be in a relationship with us. What does the steadfastness of God’s love feel like in your life?***

A text about God’s love: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.



Texts in which God’s people are portrayed as sheep tend to come out of the experiences of vulnerable communities. When life is tough, when we’re in the middle of difficult situations and swamped by anxiety, it’s very good news to know that God is with us. Notice how that “for you are with me” comes right in the middle of the psalm – it’s the centre around which everything else revolves.

The psalmist describes the restoration that God the shepherd provides. Food and drink (green pastures and still water) are given to nurture us, and we are made to lie down and rest. At least sheep rest when they need to – it seems to be only humans who push themselves to keep going through all the tiredness! And isn't it good to know that God is looking after us, and doing all the "God work" so that we don't have to: the weight of the world does not belong on our shoulders. We can read "the table prepared in the presence of enemies" in two possible ways: is it that we get to eat while those who would harm us have to stand and watch – or are we reconciled and everyone joins together for the meal? The ongoing love of God for God's people is often depicted as a banqueting feast, in both Testaments of Scripture.

- ❖ ***"For you are with me": is that something that's at the centre of your life?***
- ❖ ***How is Eucharist like a banquet in which we feast together?***
- ❖ ***Which part of the psalm speaks most to you of the good news that is the love and grace of God?***

Photo: Brigitte Elsner, Unsplash



We were created by God and for relationship with God and with one another. And God keeps reaching out to us, even when we fall into a rut or head off in the wrong direction. The constancy of God's love assures us that we are not alone. **We were created to flourish**, to have a full and abundant life, a life full of love (aroha), peace (rongo) and joy (hari) in the Holy Spirit. This is very good news indeed!

***This week, think about the idea of God being "good news"
– what might that be like in your daily life,
and the life of your worshipping community?***

What does "flourishing" look like for you?

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

2 Jesus is good news



Photo: Malcolm Lightbody, Unsplash

The overarching story of the Bible is about God’s continual love for us. Human beings have a tendency to mess things up, in our dealings with God, with one another, and with creation. (This is what sin is.) But God never stops loving us.

In the Ash Wednesday passage in the last study, we saw how God initiated the process of making things right again, even though the relationship between God and humanity was broken from the human side. Our reconciliation to God has come about through what God, in Jesus Christ, has done.

Speaking to the crowd in Jerusalem, Peter told them,

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22-24)

The death and resurrection of Jesus is good news, for it’s because of this that things were put right between us and God. What we humans couldn’t do for ourselves, because of our limitations, God did for us in Jesus. The cross on which Jesus died was the place where good and

evil collided – and good won out. The inexhaustible love of God, as seen in the suffering of Jesus, the one who was divine as well as human, couldn't be defeated. Jesus died – and then he was raised to life again. As John Pritchard says, "You can't keep a good God down."

The resurrection of Jesus, which we celebrate at Easter, is probably the best news we'll ever hear in our lives. It means that death has been defeated: just as death wasn't the end for Jesus, it won't be the end for us either – we will live again after we die. And the fact that there is life after death means that Christians can be committed to living life in all its fullness, in all its flourishing, *before* death.

The story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is told in the Gospels (there's that "good news" word again), the first four books of our New Testament. Their accounts are subtly different, which is exactly what you'd expect when such a story is told by four different people, but they all agree on the basics: the tomb was empty, the disciples repeatedly met Jesus, whose body was the same but gloriously different, and it was women who were the first witnesses to the resurrection. (Incidentally, this is good news for women, whose testimony was historically undervalued.)



The resurrection transformed the disciples' lives – people who were hiding in fear behind locked doors were announcing joyfully, and prepared to die for, the news that "Jesus is risen."

- ❖ ***What does the death and resurrection of Jesus mean for you?***
- ❖ ***What might it mean for your community?***
- ❖ ***Why, do you think, can Easter be called "the ultimate bringer of hope"?***

Jesus' life is good news too

We can't tell the story of Jesus without talking about his death and resurrection – but his life itself is also good news for us as we live our



own lives. Part of that is because Jesus understands what it's like to be human. He knows what it's like to be hungry and thirsty and tired, and needing a drink and a rest – that's how the story of his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) begins. He knows what it feels like when a good friend dies – he wept at the

tomb of Lazarus (John 11). And in the hours before his death on the cross he experienced all the physical and mental agony that went with betrayal, torture, and crucifixion.

Jesus also knows what it's like to spent his time with people who don't always get what he's on about (occasionally this included members of his own family, see Mark 3), and to need to get away from the crowds and be on his own with God. The disciples were pretty thick sometimes, especially in Mark's Gospel, and yet Jesus coped with this far better than we mostly do.

In taking on our human nature Jesus took on all the weaknesses of our human condition and so he's able to identify fully with our weakness. He experienced emotions – anger, grief, and so on, without being overwhelmed by these. Indeed, Jesus shows us what the emotional life of a human being should look like. In short – he gets us.

- ❖ ***How does it feel when we realise Jesus really does know what it's like to be human?***
- ❖ ***How might Jesus' example help us deal with the difficult people in our own lives?***

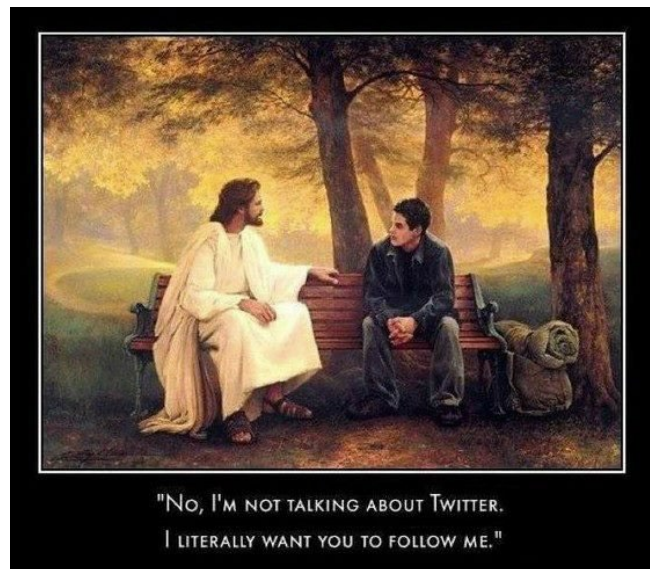
In all of this, Jesus shows us how to live, and he helps us to live a life which honours God. That's where following Jesus and learning from him – what we call **discipleship** – comes in.

A text about discipleship Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew's Gospel is sometimes called "the teacher's Gospel." Right through it, we see Jesus teaching, both crowds of people and his disciples (eg in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7). Teaching shows us who Jesus is. At the end of this Gospel he leaves his disciples with the instruction to go into all the world to make other disciples and to teach them – but in order to do this they (we) must first understand.

Here, Jesus wants those who are burdened to learn from him how to live a life that's sustainable, that avoids burn-out. A modern paraphrase puts it like this: "Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." (The Message) It's an invitation to discipleship – and this means more than just knowing stuff



with our heads. It's really about adopting a way of life in which we follow Jesus and try to think, speak, act, and love like him. And the good news is that we don't have to do this on our own. What makes it easier is the ongoing presence of Jesus himself, who promised us "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

- ❖ *What's one thing you've learnt from Jesus in the past year? What's something you'd like to learn in the future?*
- ❖ *What does "rest for your souls" mean for you?*
- ❖ *What might be some key components of the way of life that is discipleship?*

Another text about discipleship John 10:1-10



‘Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

This is part of an extended metaphor that speaks of sheep, shepherd, gate, gatekeeper, strangers, thieves, bandits (and, later, wolves) – all helping us understand who Jesus is, and who we are

in relation to him. What comes through strongly is the care that Jesus, as “shepherd” and “gate,” has for those who follow him, care even at risk to himself.

There’s an inclusivity here that’s important. The gate isn’t there to keep out other sheep – indeed, shortly after this Jesus says, “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” Instead the gate is there to guard against things that threaten the well-being of the sheep — thieves, bandits, and wolves. Who might these be today?



Photo: Katelyn Greer, Unsplash

- ❖ ***What does it mean for us, as followers of Jesus today, to be protected by the gate and the shepherd?***
- ❖ ***What does it mean for us, in our context, to be “saved”?***
- ❖ ***Who might these “other sheep” be, and how is inclusivity shown in your community?***
- ❖ ***Jesus is good news for his “sheep”: is there anyone or anything for whom Jesus is not good news?***
- ❖ ***What does “abundant life” look like for you?***

The good news about Jesus “Descent” by Malcolm Guite

They sought to soar into the skies,
Those classic gods of high renown,
For lofty pride aspires to rise,
But you came down.

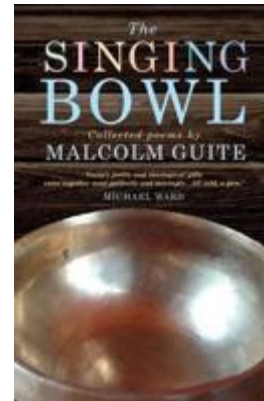
You dropped down from the mountains sheer,
Forsook the eagle for the dove,
The other gods demanded fear,
But you gave love.

Where chiselled marble seemed to freeze
Their abstract and perfected form,
Compassion brought you to your knees,
Your blood was warm.

They called for blood in sacrifice,
Their victims on an altar bled,
When no one else could pay the price,
You died instead.

They towered above our mortal plain,
Dismissed this restless flesh with scorn,
Aloof from birth and death and pain,
But you were born.

Born to these burdens, borne by all
Born with us all 'astride the grave',
Weak, to be with us when we fall,
And strong to save.



***This week, think about how Jesus is “good news” for you
– not in theory but in the actual moments
of your daily life, and the life
of your worshipping community?***

What does “discipleship” look like for you?

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

3 Belonging to the “good news people”



This session can be subtitled “The Church is good news.” It’s about having a people to belong with, a network of relationships where members care about one another. The good news is that we’re not alone.

Why’s this important? Because humans are communal beings. How many social relationships people have and how good they are has been linked to mental and physical health. Research tells us that people with adequate social relationships have a 50% greater likelihood of survival when compared to people with poor or insufficient relationships, an effect comparable to stopping smoking. Not everyone, however, is blessed with such a network. Even before COVID 19 came on the scene people were beginning to talk about a “loneliness epidemic”; the pandemic just made it worse. In his *City of God* Augustine reminds us constantly of the importance of human community, of how “the life of the saints” (ie Christians in general) is social, and of the difference between community with God and community without God.

In the last session we talked about discipleship, as a way of life that involves following Jesus and learning from and about him. Sometimes this can be difficult. What makes discipleship easier is that it’s something we do together with other Christians. Part of discipleship is the idea that we’re called to be members of a group, the “Body of Christ.” We’re identified with Christ as individuals, who’ll rise again because of his death and resurrection, and collectively, as members of the community of the Church.

❖ *How can we help each other follow Christ? (Be specific!)*

What is the Church anyway?

Well it's not a building. We don't "come to church," as if to a pile of bricks and mortar: we *are* church. As they say, "the Church is what you have left after the building has burned down." The Church is and always has been a community of people, and a community gathered together by God. It's a community whose very being is rooted and grounded in the being of God: we are church because of God.



Photo: Elianna Gill, Unsplash

Meeting to worship together is one of the things the Church does, and it's been like this ever since the beginning of the Church, as described in the book of Acts. We can come to God as individuals, but we need each other to encounter God fully, and that's because each of us on our own can only perceive a little bit of the hugeness that God is. A key aspect of the Anglican church that emerged from the Reformation is that we may think differently (about God and about all sorts of things) but we worship together. Relationship is the key to this: we are people – "good news people" – who belong with one another.

One of the marks of the Church is that it's holy. Holy because the Holy Spirit lives in its members and guides its mission, and holy because its members are called to be holy, because its members are saints. That was how all the New Testament churches were described – as the saints that met in a particular place. That doesn't mean they were perfect (whew!); anyone who's read any of the New Testament letters knows how far short of perfection those communities fell – just look at Corinth for example.

From the start the Church has known itself as the Body of Christ, a living organism made up of many different parts with different gifts, whose head is Christ. Christ has ascended into heaven, but he's also here on earth in the members of his body: we're his hands and his feet, and the visible signs of his presence here. Dietrich Bonhoeffer talked about Christ existing as the local church community. We're the ones called to be church to our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends and whānau.



- ❖ ***We are church because of God: what might this mean for your parish or ministry unit?***
- ❖ ***Being holy (“saints”) doesn’t mean we have to be perfect, but there’s something there about wanting to grow more like Christ. How do we help each other to do this?***
- ❖ ***“Christ existing as the local church community” – really? Bonhoeffer never met our community! He was serious about this: what do you think he meant?***

A text about the Church 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



Here, Peter reminds his audience about who they are, identifying them with Jesus and assuring them of their new heritage. He weaves together metaphors of “stones” being built into God’s temple with the idea of Jesus as the “living stone” in whom they’ve found their hope. They’re being built like living stones into a spiritual building: followers of Jesus are being made into Christ’s image, and so are also “chosen and precious in God’s sight.”

The Church (a chosen race, a holy nation) is the people of good news, because we’ve been called together to proclaim God’s mighty acts. We’re God’s own people, called into the light: this is the community we belong with.

- ❖ *How does it feel to know God sees us as “chosen and precious”? When might we need reminding of that?*
- ❖ *We spend a lot of time thinking about our physical buildings – how might we focus ourselves on the spiritual buildings we’re called to be?*
- ❖ *Peter emphasises here the communal nature of the Christian life (one brick doesn’t make a building): which do you find easier, your individual walk with God or our shared journey?*

We’re all part of the Body of Christ, and this is one body under one head. It’s easy to become siloed and focus only on our small part of the body, forgetting that each congregation, each ministry unit, is linked to others. We’re part of something greater than ourselves – our diocese, our province (the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia), the Anglican Communion, the whole Church. This is about **connection** – relating to other parts of the whole and encouraging one another. We’re brothers and sisters in Christ, so we’re each others’ supporters, not competitors, in the mission and ministry we offer.

There's a horizontal and a vertical horizontal dimension to this sort of connection, to Christian fellowship. This horizontal dimension, the relationship that Christians have with one another in and through the Church, is because of our common sharing in Christ and what he's done for us. The vertical dimension is that as Christians we share together in and with Christ. We live in Christ, and part of that – as we know from Philippians 3:10 – is that we share in the sufferings of Christ, and in his resurrection.



It's why building connection at the local level – the level of the diocese and the ministry units within it – really matters. When we remember that we relate to each other in and through Christ it takes the focus off our individual views and puts it on the big picture of our relationship with Jesus, his love for us and his giving of himself for us. That's the good news at the heart of the Church. Thinking of what unites us – rather than concentrating on differences – helps us live as the people we're called to be.

- ❖ *The horizontal and the vertical dimension of Christian life: which are you most aware of? Which do you find easier to live out?*
- ❖ *What's our relational culture like? Do we know enough about each other's lives – even within our own ministry unit – to support and encourage one another? Or is that a scary thought?*
- ❖ *Think about the ministry and mission offered by another ministry unit (near you or in another part of the diocese): how can your group support what's happening somewhere else?*

A text about the good news people Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs

were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.



This comes immediately after the account of the day of Pentecost; it sums up that story and pivots toward the ministry of the church in Jerusalem that we get in Acts 3-7. Luke emphasises the culture of unity and commitment among the earliest church, and the way the

believers shared everything in common. They were serious about attention to the apostle's teaching, living in community, the breaking of bread (the Eucharist or a precursor to it), and prayers (possibly a service of the word – Morning/Evening Prayer?). Important also was practical sharing with those who are less fortunate – the sort of thing we express today when we bring contributions to the foodbank and offer them, and our money, when we come to worship. What stands out is the quality of their common life: their glad and generous hearts and their praise of God. This is a group of people who were living out the good news.

- ❖ ***Do you think this is a strictly historical portrait of the early Church? Why or why not?***
- ❖ ***Even if it's an idealised picture, what effect does it have? Why might Luke have written it that way?***
- ❖ ***What connection might there be between the life led by that community and the growth of the Church?***

Being good news people “Stone in God’s Wall” by Barb Lash

Stone in God’s wall
flat bottomed
resting on the support beneath
supporting others above.



One stone looks unimportant,
ordinary,
easy not to notice,
but,
the wall is holey and unstable without it,
holy and stable with it.

***This week, think about the idea of being
“good news people”
– what might that be like in your daily life,
and the life of your worshipping community?***

What does “connection” look like for you?

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

4 Spreading the good news

Photo: Nina Strehl, Unsplash



This session can also be subtitled “The Church is good news,” because it’s good news not just for its members but for those who don’t belong to it as well. Why’s that? Because we get to partner with God in accomplishing God’s purpose for the

world. We get to spread the good news by what we say, what we do, and how we live – so that others can experience this too.

We get to play a part in building a world where every person is important, because every human being is made in God’s image and is valuable to God. A world where the poor count, where the disadvantaged are at the centre of things, where justice, and fair trade, and peace-making, and care for the environment all matter. As Jesus said, “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Jesus lives in those who are hungry and thirsty and in need of clothing, in those who are strangers or who are sick or in prison. When we care for them we show them that they matter, and when we care for them we are also caring for Jesus. People wonder sometimes about “the least of these who are members of my family” – are they part of the community of believers or are they outsiders? Do they belong or not? But the parable itself isn’t really concerned about their identity, other than to identify their need.

- ❖ *When might we fail to see the needs of the disadvantaged?*
- ❖ *What’s key to spreading the good news – is it our beliefs or our actions?*

A text about loving our neighbours Luke 10:30-37

Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.



But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

Jesus told this parable in response to a lawyer who wanted to test him. This lawyer knew what the law said – love God and love your neighbour – but he asked Jesus "And who is my neighbour?" It sounds like he was wanting to find some wiggle-room, maybe hoping for a small list of "neighbours" so he could forget about everyone else. This would certainly make keeping the commandment easier, since the smaller the circle of one's "neighbours," the easier it is to act lovingly towards them. The problem is that by being so concerned about who qualified as his neighbour, this legal expert didn't think about whether he himself was acting like a "neighbour."

The Samaritan is an unexpected hero. Samaritans weren't the most popular people to the Jews of Jesus' day, yet by his compassion he shows up the others, the priest and the Levite who "passed by on the other side." The parable about the Good Samaritan challenges us to reach out to those who are different from ourselves.

- ❖ ***When have you been tempted to look the other way when you see someone's need?***
- ❖ ***What the injured man thought about being rescued by a Samaritan isn't recorded – what might he have felt? Who is the most unexpected type of person you might be helped by?***
- ❖ ***Who is your neighbour?***
- ❖ ***Why might we hesitate to reach out to someone who is very different from us?***



At the heart of all this is love: God's love and grace, that we experience for ourselves and want to share with others – those others whom God also loves. The Church is called to take the presence and the love of God into the world, announcing the good news and working for the flourishing of society. As English theologian Archbishop William Temple (1881–1944) is quoted as saying, *"The Church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it."* It's in that sense that the Church is good news for those who don't belong to it.

- ❖ ***Do you agree with William Temple? Why or why not?***

We're called to be good news for those who live in our suburbs, our towns and our cities. We see this in the way churches reached out to care for their communities during the pandemic, during natural disasters, and as a normal part of their life. Holy Trinity Woodville, for instance, teamed up with a local café to get meals to elderly residents

in the town during the August 2021 lockdown, St John the Baptist Te Puke cares for seasonal workers from Vanuatu, and there are many examples of parishes reaching out to affected communities and marae in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle in February 2023. Other parishes, Anglican social service agencies, and church schools get involved in service projects both here in Aotearoa and overseas.

❖ ***How has your ministry unit or individuals within it reached out to those who are “still outside” your membership?***

❖ ***How might you do this in the future?***

So far we’ve talked about spreading the good news in practical ways, through reaching out in love and service to others. There’s other ways to communicate the gospel – to share God’s love and grace with the world around us. We’re talking about mission here. Part of our calling as Anglicans is to participate in God’s mission in the world. We do this through respectful evangelism, loving service, prophetic witness, and care for the environment, lived out in all our various contexts.



The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement. Developed by the Anglican Consultative Council (a representative body which includes lay people, clergy and bishops), they express the Anglican Communion’s common commitment to God’s mission, understood in a very holistic way. This sees mission as more than just “winning souls for eternity” but as something that also relates to this life.

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.



These are sometimes abbreviated to Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure.

❖ *Which one do you relate to most easily? Which do you find hardest to connect with or to do?*

❖ *How is each of these a way of spreading the good news?*

A Good News Text Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

This functions as a programme statement in Luke’s Gospel; it’s what the evangelist believes Jesus’ life was all about.

- ❖ *What does good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight, and freedom for the oppressed look like in your context?*
- ❖ *Jesus said “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”: what might we do “today”?*

What Jesus did, we’re also called to do: that is our ministry. If you thought “ministry” was just for clergy, think again! All baptised members of the Body of Christ exercise a ministry, and that’s not just about what happens on a Sunday morning (the rosters). The Catechism puts it like this:



What is the ministry of lay persons? From baptism, their vocation is to witness to Christ in the world using the gifts the Spirit gives them. Within the Church they share in the leadership of worship and in government. (ANZPB/HKMoA p932)

We’re called to follow Christ, and live as God’s people in our daily life and work. The word we use for this is **Vocation**. That’s not the same as “job” or “career.” As Stephen Gerber says, it’s “that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God.” Vocation is not just our church roles. Often it relates to the roles we take on in our work (paid or unpaid), always it’s about what we do with our lives. In poet Gerard Manley Hopkins’ phrase it’s about finding out “What I do is me: for that I came.”

We’re all, as Christians, called to share the good news of God’s love and grace. And (humans are a diverse bunch) we’re all going to do that in different ways. Part of the vocation question for each of us is to find out how, and where, and with whom, we’re going to share the good news. And this may change in the course of our lives.

- ❖ *How does your daily life give you opportunities to live out God’s good news and share this with others?*

Thinking about vocation

Henry Van Dyke

Let me but do my work from day to day,
In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
In roaring market-place or tranquil room;
Let me but find it in my heart to say,
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
"This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
"Of all who live, I am the one by whom
"This work can best be done in the right way."

Then shall I see it not too great, nor small,
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the labouring hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best.

***This week, think about the idea of
"spreading the good news"
– what might that be like in your daily life,
and the life of your worshipping community?***

What does "vocation" look like for you?

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

5 Good news for young and old

Photo: Janosch Lino, Unsplash



That God knows and loves us all, and that everyone is welcome within the Church is good news – especially in a society where different generations can so often find themselves cut adrift from one another. Local churches can be important intergenerational spaces, where young and old, tamariki/rangatahi and koroua/kuia can share life together as fellow members of the body of Christ. People of different ages need each other, as they can help each other to see more of God.

Bringing the generations together, especially the very young and the very old, allows people of different backgrounds and outlooks to mix. Encountering difference like this helps to make us fully human, as people created in the image of the God who in Trinity embodies unity and diversity. American thinker John Westerhoff III said, “We grow by being with a group of people who are different from each other.” Churches, however, can sometimes become cosy places filled with people who are very similar to one another in terms of age and attitude. While this makes for a comfortable setting, it can lack the energy and creativity that mirrors the energy and creativity of God. A congregation which blends old and young isn’t only a community that is flourishing, it also creates the conditions for the individuals within it to flourish.

- ❖ ***What’s been your experience with mixing with people who are different from you? Has this been positive or negative?***
- ❖ ***What have you learned from being with someone of a different age group or outlook?***

One recent development which embodies this intergenerational approach is Messy Church.

Messy Church is a way of being church that's built around these values: Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration. It began with a local congregation in



England in 2004 and has spread across the world, including

Aotearoa New Zealand. That "all-age" is important – when it's working well, Messy Church isn't "church for children and families," it's for everyone, relevant and accessible to all ages. Messy Church is just one example of an intergenerational approach to church – what others have you encountered?

- ❖ ***What's been your experience of intergenerational church? How might it be different from what currently happens where you are?***
- ❖ ***How has someone of a different age or stage to you given you a new idea about God?***

A text about intergenerational learning Luke 2:41-51

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have



been searching for you in great anxiety.’ He said to them, ‘Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Here’s Jesus, at the age of twelve, sitting in the temple, spending time with the teachers. In that society he was on the cusp of adulthood at that age, learning the Torah and preparing to take on the obligations of his religion. We’re told he was listening to these scholars and asking them questions. Part of this story is to mark Jesus out as someone special, someone able to hold his own in a public setting (like the future Emperor Augustus giving the funeral oration for his grandmother). But there’s something else going on here: even if those teachers didn’t politely tell him to go away, they could have set aside his questions and just continued discussing amongst themselves. That they didn’t, but instead settled down to a theological discussion with Jesus which clearly went on for some time shows, I think, a huge commitment to intergenerational learning.

- ❖ ***When was the last time you engaged in theological discussion with someone younger, or older, than you? This might be in your family, or in your church community.***
- ❖ ***How good (or bad) do you think we are at passing on the faith to the generations who will come after us?***

Good news for those who are young

The good news for our tamariki and rangitahi, for our children and young people, is that God sees you, God loves you, God has work for you to do, and you have a place within God’s people.

We see this in the way Jesus interacted with children, even when his disciples would have sent them away. He blessed them and made it clear that “it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” (See Matthew 19:13-15.) In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus uses a little child as an example, saying to the twelve, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”



Photo: Christian Bowen, Unsplash

- ❖ *How does your ministry unit welcome children? Does it welcome them as if they were Jesus?*
- ❖ *If your ministry unit doesn’t have children, how would you like to welcome them? How would any children who come know they are welcome?*

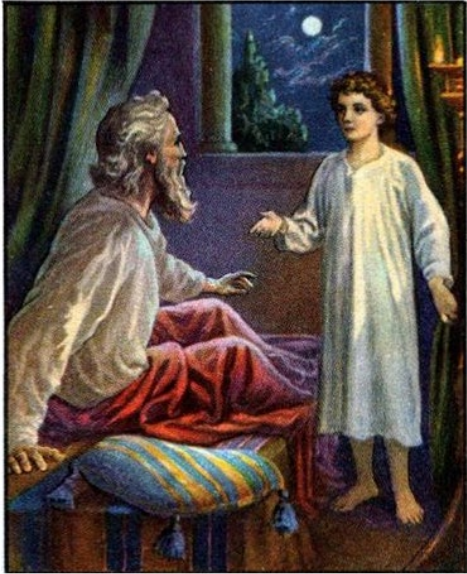
With all the pressures on rangitahi these days, whether it’s relationship challenges, working out what to study or what career to aim at, mental health issues, loneliness and isolation, shaping their identity amid the pressure to conform to societal expectations – and everything magnified by social media – the Church can be a place for genuine caring irl (in real life – not just on TikTok). Taking the 5th Mark of Mission seriously – striving to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustaining and renewing the life of the earth – can assure the next generation that others too care about climate change. As young people transition into adulthood the Church can help them to develop as people and as Christians and to begin to find their own ministry.

A text about nurturing the young

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to

grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and



ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time.

And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." ' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

We see here the trusting relationship between Samuel and the prophet Eli. Eli mentors young Samuel into identifying God's voice and listening to God's call on his life. It's clear Samuel is young, still a boy – but he's not too young for God to call him and entrust him with a ministry. And Eli is old, to the point where his eyesight has faded – but he's still in service. He still knows how to attend to God's voice.

❖ ***What strikes you most about this story?***

❖ ***Read on to what comes next, 1 Samuel 3:11-20. The message God gives to Samuel to give to Eli is brutal! What does this tell us about God's trust in Samuel?***

The Church can be a place where the smallest of shoots are nurtured and cared for. In Waiapu we call this **Koru Ministry**, the nurturing of new life and new growth. It's the responsibility of all of us, to care for and mentor those who are younger. We see this a lot in the Bible, where teaching the next generation is emphasised over and over. God appointed the law and commanded the ancestors

to teach to their children;
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments. (Psalm 78:5-7)



Photo: Duskfall Crew, Unsplash

- ❖ ***In many of our ministry units, there are few children and young people. How might we get better at passing on our faith and nurturing the next generation of leaders?***

Good news for those who are old

The good news for those who are old is that God sees you, God loves you, God has work for you to do, and you have a place within God's people. Church is a place where we honour and draw on the wisdom – and the prayers! – of the elders. The Wisdom literature of the Bible has this advice: “Do not ignore the discourse of the aged, for they themselves learned it from their parents; from them you learn how to understand and to give an answer when the need arises.” (Sirach 8:9) Memory is central to religious identity, and in many congregations the most elderly are the ones who remember. They are the bearers of living tradition, the keepers and tellers of the stories.

- ❖ ***How can we value our elders more, and celebrate their faithfulness?***
- ❖ ***How can our elders help us live into a future that is different from the past?***

Generation To Generation, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

In a house which becomes a home,
one hands down and another takes up
the heritage of mind and heart,
laughter and tears, musings and deeds.
Love, like a carefully loaded ship,
crosses the gulf between the generations.
Therefore, we do not neglect the ceremonies
of our passage: when we wed, when we die,
and when we are blessed with a child;
When we depart and when we return;
When we plant and when we harvest.
Let us bring up our children. It is not
the place of some official to hand to them their heritage.
If others impart to our children our knowledge
and ideals, they will lose all of us that is
wordless and full of wonder.
Let us build memories in our children,
lest they drag out joyless lives,
lest they allow treasures to be lost because
they have not been given the keys.
We live, not by things, but by the meanings
of things. It is needful to transmit the passwords
from generation to generation.

***This week, think about the idea of
“good news for young and old”
– what might that be like in your daily life,
and the life of your worshipping community?
What does “Koru Ministry” look like for you?***

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

of lit candles and comments such as “Our prayers are with the families in their tragic loss.” In te Ao Māori the physical and spiritual worlds are integrated, and karakia before food and at beginnings of projects are fairly standard: Pākehā are learning.



- ❖ ***How is God “good news” in a multicultural and multi-faith society like ours?***
- ❖ ***What examples can you think of where the Church or some of its members has been active in the public sphere? What impact did this have?***
- ❖ ***Do you agree that Christian faith demands participation in the public square?***
- ❖ ***How “secular” do you think New Zealand is? Why do you think that?***

God’s people are good news for Aotearoa

We, as followers of Jesus, members of the Church which is the Body of Christ, are good news for Aotearoa. How? As we saw in Session 3, part of this is by being welcoming communities, creating connection between people and thus acting to combat the loneliness that can easily lie under the surface of our society. We’re called to live – as individuals and as congregations – so that all people can see, by our words and our actions, that they are beings created in the image of God, and therefore known and loved by God and by God’s people.

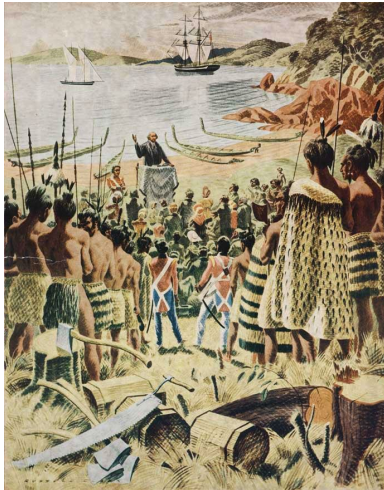
- ❖ ***How can we show other people that God knows and loves them?***

And we also spread good news for Aotearoa by our practical ways of caring – community gardens, foodbanks, social enterprises and mission-aligned investments, Growing Through Grief and Senior Chef programmes, and a host of other examples (see Session 4). So much of the ministry of Vocational Deacons is this type of community-facing everyday expressions of care; so too is the ministry of lay people both inside and outside their congregational involvement.



❖ *Good news for Aotearoa – what examples can you think of from your, or your ministry unit's, recent history?*

Our history in this land



There's another way in which we as Anglican Christians can be good news for Aotearoa, and that's by knowing and telling our history in this land, both the good and the bad parts of it. The first preaching of the gospel, that Christmas Day sermon at Oihi in 1814, was a joint effort by Samuel Marsden and Ruatara: Marsden spoke and Ruatara translated, on the text from Luke 2:10: "Behold! I bring you glad tidings of great joy." The idea of "good news" was there at the very beginning. The story of Christianity taking root in

Aotearoa is the story of missionaries, both those originally from the UK and Māori. The role of Māori in spreading the gospel is clear from Kingi Ihaka's Poi chant (it's in the service of Midday Prayer, *ANZPB/HKMoA* 154-156).

Several decades later, as increasing numbers of settlers came here, CMS missionaries, especially Henry Williams, had a leading role in translating Te Tiriti, the Treaty of Waitangi, and encouraging Māori to sign it in 1840. Those early years, and the decades that followed, were times of encounter, biculturalism, and working in partnership between Pākehā and Māori (here the missionary beginnings of Waiapu and the holding of its first four synods in te reo Māori are relevant), but they were also times of pain, betrayal, colonisation, and appropriation of land. We need to recognise and recount the positive and the negative parts of our past – and our present – in this place. John 8:32 tells us "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (this is part of the Compass Rose emblem of the Anglican Communion): we cannot move well into the future without acknowledging and celebrating what was good and acknowledging and repenting of what was harmful. All of this, the good and the bad, has made us what we are – it's part of our **Whakapapa**. We look to the past to inform the future – Ka mua, ka muri.

- ❖ *How well do you / does your ministry unit know the stories of Anglican history in Aotearoa?*
- ❖ *All families have glory days and tragedies in their past – and sometimes the same events are seen quite differently depending on who is speaking: how is the story of our church like this?*

Toitū te Tiriti

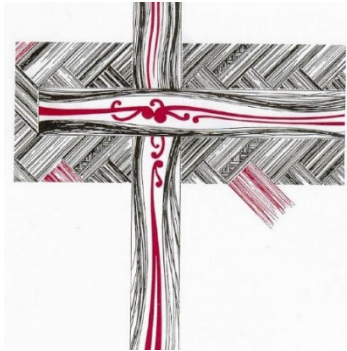
Part of our gift to Aotearoa is an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi as covenant. A covenant is a binding agreement which establishes and protects an ongoing relationship between the parties. Covenant – like the covenants between God and humanity – is a key theme in the Bible. Viewing the Treaty in covenantal terms gives a more relational understanding than seeing it merely as a contract. After all, a contract becomes null and void if one part breaks it, but with a covenant a violation by one party doesn't terminate the agreement.



As our Archbishops have said, “We are the Church of Te Tiriti, integrating a Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based framework that upholds the principles of partnership and bicultural development.” This framework is our Constitution, te Pouhere, adopted by General Synod/Te Hīnota Whānui in 1992. It provides an opportunity for each of the three partners, Tikanga (= way, style, or cultural model) Māori, Tikanga Pākehā (European), Tikanga Pasefika, to be equal partners in decision-making and to exercise mission and ministry to God's people within the culture of each partner. Through te Pouhere, each Tikanga has enriched the Church through its different expressions of Anglicanism.

Co-governance in New Zealand is a term used to describe various arrangements where Māori and the Crown share decision-making power or where Māori exercise a form of self-determination. It's things like co-management of resources such as rivers and mountains and the

guaranteed inclusion of Māori in local government (Māori wards or other representation).



Our Anglican approach to co-governance through Te Pouhere is something we as a Church can share with the rest of Aotearoa. It's not perfect – because people aren't perfect (again, we know this, don't we) – but it is a thoughtful response to the history of life in this land. Our more than 30 years of experience of co-governance can speak to others who live in this land.

- ❖ ***How do you see the Constitution / Te Pouhere operating? How have you experienced our Three Tikanga Church?***
- ❖ ***What might you say to people in Aotearoa who are nervous about co-governance?***

A text about Good News for Aotearoa

He Honore

He hōnore	Honour
He korōria	And glory to God
Maungarongo ki te whenua	Peace throughout the land
Whakaaro pai e	And goodwill
Ki ngā tangata katoa	To all people
Ake ake	Forever
Ake ake	Forever
Āmine	Amen
Te Atua	For it is God
He piringa	Who is my companion
Tōku oranga	My source of life

This waiata comes from the angels' words to the shepherds when Christ was born: "Kia whai korōria te Atua i runga rawa, kia mau te rongō ki runga ki te whenua, me te whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata." / "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours." (Luke 2:14)

***This week, think about the idea of
“good news for Aotearoa”
– what might that be like in your daily life,
and the life of your worshipping community?***

What does “Whakapapa” look like for you?

Closing Reflections

The word “gospel” means “good news.” That’s the story we’re invited to live inside and to be carriers of: the good news of God, of Jesus, the good news of the Church. We are gospel people, we’re the people of good news! We’re called to share these messages with our whānau, our friends and neighbours, and with the world all around us – but first we need to see it for ourselves.



In this study we’ve looked together at how God is good news, and how Jesus is good news. We’ve thought about how we belong to the “good news people” and how we’re called to spread the good news – both of those are ways in which the Church is good news. We’ve considered how all this is good news for those who are young and those who are old, and for those who live here in Aotearoa.

Woven into this are some themes that are part of the vision for the Diocese of Waiapu – flourishing, discipleship, connection, vocation, koru ministry, and whakapapa. Each of these connects with an aspect of the good news.

- ❖ ***If someone said to you “the world is full of bad news” how might you respond?***
- ❖ ***How does your life speak to others of the good news?***
- ❖ ***How is your ministry unit part of sharing the good news with those who live and work nearby?***
- ❖ ***As this study draws to a close, how has it changed you?***

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

Closing Worship

You might like to close each session by praying together. Here are some possible prayers.

God of all mercy,
your Son brought good news to the despairing,
freedom to the oppressed
and joy to the sad;
fill us with your spirit
that the people of our day may see in us his likeness
and glorify your name.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus, our Redeemer,
give us your power to reveal and proclaim the good news,
so that wherever we may go
the sick may be healed, lepers embraced,
and the dead and dying given new life;
for the glory of your holy name. Amen.

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.
Murua ō mātou hara,
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha, me te korōria,
Āke ake ake. Āmine.

