



God Provides

Rev Ed Masters

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift... The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7, 11-13)

In every season Christians are faced with the same question – how do we be faithful to Jesus in this time and this place? As we seek to respond to God's good news we can draw on two thousand years of Christian teaching and tradition, countless books, radio, internet, and magazine articles and the lived faith experience of so many people – and of course the Bible to guide us.

And yet as the earliest Christian communities like the Ephesians wrestled with the question of how to be faithful to Jesus, they had none of these things we take for granted. You can imagine that as they sought to worship together, serve together, take care of one another and share God's love in their place they had many conversations and asked many questions. They drew on the knowledge of the Old Testament, relied on the memory of teachings they had received and waited on letters from people such as Paul.

The Ephesians had to listen for the Word of God in their life together.

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What's Inside:

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- A LITTLE BLACK NEW TESTAMENT
- SESSION SNIPPETS
- MAPLE GLEN VISIT
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- NEW SEATS
- WALKING GROUP
- CHURCH FAIR
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- PURE EPETOMA
- CHURCH OFFICE
- SERVICE DETAILS

And as they learned to be faithful, Paul reminded them that God enables and equips the church for the work to which they are called. The passage above tells us that God cares for the church by providing different gifts - apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors - to enable the church to grow into the maturity of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the years, the church has discovered many ways in which God equips us for service. The Ephesians relied on these gifts, the Corinthians (1 Cor 12) had a different list of gifts, as did the Romans (Rom 12). Catholics, Presbyterians, Anglicans and Pentecostals have all discovered different ways in which God helps the church to be faithful! The point isn't the names of the gifts themselves, but the insight that God provides for the church!

It seems that First Church does not have the same capacity that it had ten years ago - let alone fifty years ago. This means it has been difficult to fill rosters, replace retired office bearers and to do the same things that were done in the past. And yet, we step forward with the faith knowing that as God's people have sought to be faithful to Jesus throughout the years, they have discovered that God provides the church with what it needs!

Faith involves continually putting our lives in the hands of God and trusting that Jesus will lead us

by the right path. The disciples had to continually reckon with the realization that their expectations and perceived needs were different than what Jesus was leading toward and equipping them for. This involved honesty - as they gave voice to disappointment and their sense of lack; humility - as they listened and learned path Jesus revealed; and openness - so that they might receive gifts from God. The same is true of us when we find ourselves feeling like we do not have enough, we need to be honest, humble and open so that we might see the ways that God is providing for us and leading us forward.

Our faith is exercised through prayer. If we humbly, honestly and openly come before God to give voice to our disappointment, questions, desires and hopes then we are making ourselves ready to receive from God - and so to find our perception and plans being aligned with God's plans and purposes.

As we journey through Advent and into a new year, I urge you to pray with honesty, humility and openness. As Christians, we need the gifts given by God to thrive - and as a church community we can draw on the experience and witness of generations who have gone before who have discovered the God who gives us what we need. May we open our hands and our hearts to receive them.

Christmas 2022



Christmas is fast approaching, and times are tough for people, some more than others. The food banks are struggling to fill their shelves.

Jesus brought love, joy, faith and peace, so let us do the same and help those in desperate need this Christmas.

There will be a container in the church foyer area for the next three Sunday Services. If you can help, please bring food item(s) and they will be donated to Presbyterian Support's Food Bank.

Items can also be left at the Church Office on weekdays from 8.00am-1.00pm.

Thank you.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light
Isaiah 9:2

A Little Black New Testament

Rev Brian Williscroft

Late in 1945, along with the other members of the St Andrew's Helensville Sunday School, (just 30 miles north of Auckland) we met for an end of year presentation of awards and commendations.

As a ten-year-old I hoped to receive a Bible award as I graduated to Junior Bible Class.

I was astonished, and disappointed, when every Sunday School pupil from the youngest to the oldest was presented with a little black New Testament.

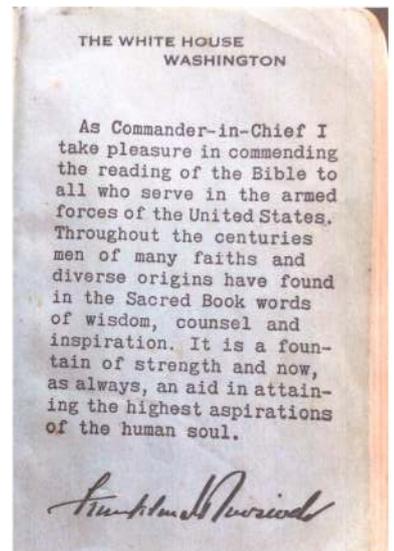
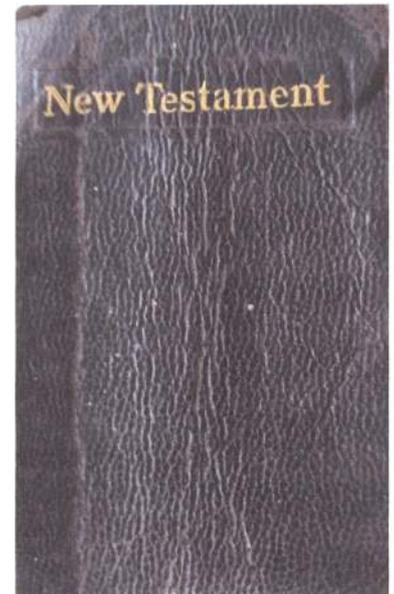
Sized to fit a shirt pocket and small enough for the smallest child to hold. Close inspection revealed that inside the cover was a signed message from the former President of the United States of America. The recent death of President Roosevelt meant the little New Testaments intended for the American soldiers were now out of date.

Our gentle minister had seen an opportunity to make these available to all the children of the Sunday School.

Additional to the Biblical material of the New Testament were selected Psalms and hymns and prayers. There was also a short guide to personal behaviour.

Designed to fit into a shirt pocket the small print of this little much-travelled "Testament" is a test for eyesight and more of a novelty than a useful book.

The outdated translation—already 400 years old when this little book was printed—has been almost universally replaced by the New Revised Standard Version.



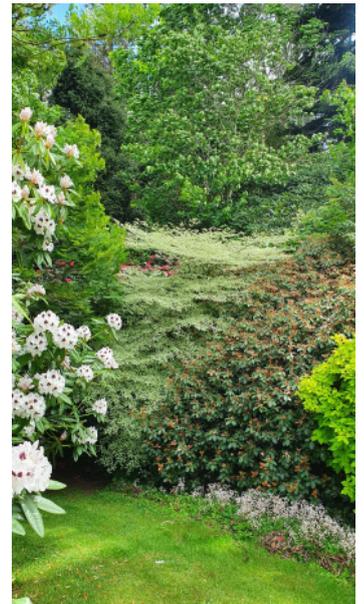
Notes from Session and Deacons

- Session encouraged Rev Malcolm Gordon to proceed with lunch time services and invitations to nearby businesses.
- Planning is underway for Christmas services.
- Session notes the Cook Islands Ekelesia are hosting Pure Epetoma (prayer week) from January 1-8 at First Church.
- The Deacons welcomed Mr Andrew Rouvi as a new deacon at our November meeting.
- Deacons have been reviewing insurance coverage and premiums and are recommending a change to First Church's insurance
- Work is underway to rent out under utilized spaces in the office building.
- An update of our locks is being undertaken to simplify our key system
- Deacons and Session wish to thank the congregation for their engagement and support at the recent AGM.

Visit to Maple Glen

A couple of weeks ago 17 of us set off early on what looked like being a rainy day, heading to Wyndham to visit the renowned Maple Glen Garden. The further south we travelled the finer the weather became, and we arrived at the garden to full sunshine! We had a wonderful time wandering through the garden which was putting on a great show! We had a super day—enjoying the garden and enjoying each others' company on our travels.

Here are a few photos from the day ...

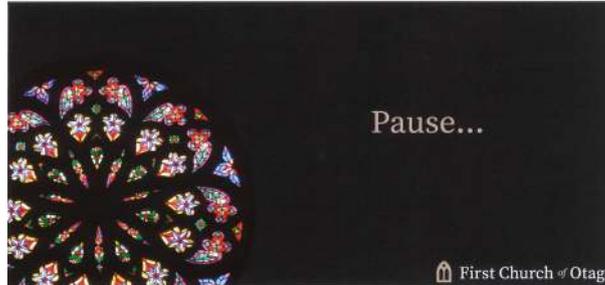


Pause ...

Rev Malcolm Gordon

I've not been here at First Church long, but it didn't take long to notice how many people come onto the grounds with their lunch. It struck me that First Church is already functioning as a place of rest and replenishment for many of those working in our neighbourhood. I began wondering how we might help people to see our beautiful church sanctuary in the same way as they see our lovely lawn, gardens and trees. Could we work from the starting place of 'rest' and go from there? That insight led me to the idea which has become *Pause*, a midday reflective service each weekday through Advent.

In conversation with Ed and Alofa, and with encouragement from the Session, the idea was honed. I became aware that Rev Anne Thomson had run a midweek service, so it seemed there was some precedent to build upon. A flyer was designed, and with no little trepidation I started dropping in to the workplaces in our neighbourhood. I don't mind telling you that I walked through the first door into the foyer of John Wickliffe House and promptly turned around and went back outside, a nervous wreck. After a brief pep talk, I was back through the doors. Over the next few days, I introduced myself to dozens of people who work in our neck of the woods. I explained who I was, that we knew this was a hectic time of the year, and that we wanted to offer people a space amid their day to 'decompress.' The flyer puts it like this: "this is the



gift we are offering – so you can be at your best for those you love and the things you care about.”

I think if we can start by helping people live their lives well, we might find open doors. The Church does not exist for itself, but for the world. Jesus uses images of salt and light, which season and illuminate what they touch, but don't turn everything else into salt or light. By offering the gift of worship in our beautiful space to our community, the hope is they can encounter God's patience, justice and compassion, and become more patient, just and compassionate people, and so bringing God's kingdom to the centre of Dunedin.

For the most part, people were very warm and appreciative of the invitation. Only once did I face something like hostility, and I simply remind myself that I was an uninvited guest intruding on their worktime. On far more occasions, I've had rich conversations and genuine interest. I've also come to appreciate how deeply loved First Church is by our neighbours. They are pleased and proud to have us over the road.

As I write this, we have had two services so far, and I'm about to head off to run the third. And at each we have had some folk from First Church, some tourists and some people who have come from workplaces in our area. It's early days and a small start, but at the very least, it is giving me the opportunity to meet people in our neighbourhood and make connections that will inform what happens next. Only God knows what that will be. Thank you for your prayers and support in this new endeavour.

New Seats

Have you noticed we have replaced the broken seat in the nook by Burns Hall? Another seat has also been added on the main lawn. The concrete was barely dry before both seats were being used!



First Church Walkers

Over the past couple of months we have been reasonably fortunate with the weather, and enjoyed our visits to Port Chalmers and Otago University

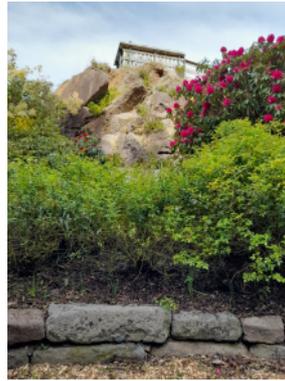
Our next walk is **this Sunday**, 4th December. Meet at 2.00pm at Charlotte Merriman's house, 18a Hobson Street, St Clair. From there we'll walk to Second Beach, and after the walk we'll have afternoon tea. Bring afternoon tea to share.

If you need a ride, contact Allan Woodhead 455 7834 or 027 432 9656

There will be no walk in January, so keep an eye out in the weekly news bulletin or order of service for information on the February walk.



University of Otago, Professorial House, built 1879



Overlooking Port Chalmers



Church Fair

The Annual Church Fair will be held on 18th March 2023, (date to be advised).

The focus of this Fair will be on Food, Produce, and Bric a Brac. There will also be smaller stalls of the usual items.

Some ideas – baking: - slices; cakes; loaves; biscuits; muffins; pikelets; scones; doughnuts; bagels; bread rolls; etc cheese rolls; savouries; small pizzas; hot food; BBQ; sweets; jams; pickles; lemon honey; sauces; Easter novelties; etc.

Perhaps a group could consider having a specialty stall.

To make this Fair a success we all need to get involved: If cooking is 'not your thing', the Fair Committee would welcome donations of sugar, butter and flour. If you have excess fruit growing in your garden, this could be donated for those who could make jams etc.

The Fair Committee have jam jars available

Enquiries to Pam Seaton, and Nancy McLeod



Christmas 2022

Carols for Kids: 5pm Christmas Eve

Midnight Service: 11:30pm Christmas
Eve

Christmas Day Service: 10am Dec 25



 **First Church** *of* Otago

Pure Epetoma – Prayer Week

Each year the Cook Islands Ekelesia begins the year with Pure Epetoma or Prayer Week. It is a way of focusing on the life of faith as we look ahead to a new year.

In 2023, First Church will be hosting the other Cook Islands churches in Dunedin for Pure Epetoma – as bible study, prayer and worship takes place each evening of the first week of the year. The theme for 2023 will be *Home*. We will read the Bible to guide us as we reflect on home, leaving home, finding home and being at home with God. In John 1:14 it says that Jesus has made him home among us, which tells us that God is making a home with us. The hope is that as we study and pray we may be able to trust that Jesus is present in our homes and hearts.

Pure Epetoma take place Sunday 1st to Sunday 8th (excluding Saturday 7th) at 5:30pm in the church. The studies are also available.

Church Office

Please note that the Church Office will be closed over Christmas and the New Year. It will be closed from Friday 23rd December, and will re-open on Monday 9th January.

December Services & Rosters

December 4th

10am Combined Service—Rev Ed Masters
Door Stewards—Glenn Marshall's team
Reader—Foalima Lemalu
TV Remote—Kau Brydon
Morning Tea—Sue & Robert McLintock

December 11th

10am Morning Worship—Rev Ed Masters
Door Stewards—Heather McFarlane's team
Reader—Selina Mulder
TV Remote—Chitra Kumarasinghe
Morning Tea— TBC
12noon Cook Islands Service—Mahuta Tangi
2.00pm Samoan Service—Rev Alofa Lale

December 18th

10am Morning Worship—Rev Ed Masters
Door Stewards—Heather McFarlane's team
Reader—Charlotte Merriman
TV Remote—Jean Kirk's team
Morning Tea— TBC
12noon Cook Islands Service—Rev Ed Masters
2.00pm Samoan Service—Rev Ed Masters

Christmas Eve

See other notice

December 25th—Christmas Day

10am Morning Worship—Rev Alofa Lale
Door Stewards—TBC
Reader—TBC
TV Remote—Adam Masters

December Meetings

Congregational Meeting 11th December
Combined Session and Deacons 14th December

January Services

January 1st

10am Combined Service

January 8th

10am Combined Service

January 15th

10am Combined Service

January 22nd

10am Morning Worship
12noon Cook Islands Service
2.00pm Samoan Service

January 29th

10am Morning Worship
12noon Cook Islands Service
2.00pm Samoan Service

Office Hours

Office: Finance & Administration Manager
Monday-Friday: 8.00am-1.00pm

Minister: Rev Ed Masters

Tuesday-Friday

Associate Minister: Rev Alofa Lale

Friday Morning

Associate Minister: Rev Malcolm Gordon

Tuesday; and Wednesday & Thursday Morning

CONTACT DETAILS

Minister: Rev Ed Masters

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