



Grace and peace be with you in this Advent season.

Whether it is waiting on the end of a phone, waiting in line or waiting for a loved one to arrive, waiting is an unavoidable part our lives. Sometimes waiting is hard and we become impatient. Sometimes we can show great patience as we wait.

Waiting is an important part of being a Christian. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the beginning of the fulfilment of God's promise to make a home among us. And yet, despite the grand promises of peace (Isaiah 2) and joy (Isaiah 9) we still experience turmoil and grief amid our lives. We still see the horrors of war and devastation unfolding around the world. Clearly we are still waiting for these promises to be fulfilled!

Waiting is often difficult. When things are delayed, when it feels like we are not moving anywhere or when it feels like nothing is changing, we can find ourselves feeling disheartened or even anxious. Waiting is like this!

During the time of Advent, we wait for Christmas. For kids this might mean anticipation about the end of school, the upcoming holidays and the excitement of Christmas Day. As Christians we wait – we remember the birth of Jesus, celebrating the goodness of God and the arrival of a welcome guest. We also wait for the return of Jesus when all things are made new, when the swords are beaten into ploughshares, where the snake and the child play in peace, and when all tears are wiped away.

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Romans 8 tells us that the whole creation is waiting with eager longing for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19). Let us, in hope, wait with patience for God's promises to be fulfilled (Romans 8:25). And as we wait, let us pray that God would open our hearts and minds to all the ways we are being loved and ministered to as we wait for the Lord.

Lord Jesus, as we wait gift us with hope, peace, joy and love. Amen

Grace and Peace
Ed

Grocery Nativity Scene

You will remember our Grocery Nativity scene from last Advent and Christmas (pictured). This year, Mary and the baby Jesus have already been on a road trip, making a journey to Knox Church towards the end of November for the Columba College Carol Service. The students from Columba were the first to use the figures last year when the service was held at First. This year, due to the impending renovations, the service moved to Knox, but the Columba students were delighted



to find the Grocery Nativity figures had mysteriously followed them. Columba Chaplain, Kim Parks described the figures as 'beautiful' and 'special' when expressing her thanks.

The project is expanding a little this year, with angels under construction at present (pictured). One of these angels will go in the foyer of the Queen's Building, a nearby office block on Princes St. The other is destined for Knox Church, who so enjoyed having Mary and Jesus visit, they asked if they could have an angel too!

It's wonderful to see enthusiasm for the project growing, and more opportunities for generosity to the Presbyterian Support Foodbank too. You will see the new angels at First Church for the Christmas Eve services.



First Church Fellowship Group

We finished up the year earlier this week with a lovely afternoon of singing, a quiz and lots of Christmas memories.

All followed by a yummy afternoon tea.



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



Ian Mitchell—A Tribute

On Friday 8th November, after spending the afternoon with Margaret, Ian Mitchell died peacefully in his sleep. Ian's family gathered, shared stories and paid tribute to a wonderful man of God before a private cremation on Monday 11th November. We naturally feel grief at Ian's death. Yet we also should give thanks for the life we shared with him. We are people of faith – who trust that because Jesus has died and risen again, we too will rise to new life with our God.

It is important that we properly acknowledge Ian, a servant of the Lord and a dedicated worker in our church community. Ian did not like a fuss, and he did not like too much public acknowledgement of his work - but the building we gather to worship in, and the Burns Hall where we share fellowship bear the fingerprints of endless hours of care and stewardship that Ian offered. Ian played a key role in maintaining and developing all our properties here at First Church for many years - so that we have a space to worship in and fellowship in. But it wasn't only in the Property Committee and Deacon's Court that Ian's contributions were made - he was a man of wisdom and compassion; thoughtfully helping the Session, gently responding to challenges and upsets in the community, seeking peace and wholeness for the church as we seek to follow Jesus.

Ian did not serve as an obligation - but because he wanted to. He served and shared his gifts with joy, and with a great sense of humour - often delivering a cheeky remark with a twinkle in his eye. As a church we are deeply grateful.

We are told in Romans 8 that nothing in all creation - not even death - can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord. And so in this faith, let us continue to give thanks for Ian and uphold Margaret and her family in prayer.

Lord God, we give you thanks for your servant Ian - and his long life of faith and service. We thank you for the blessing he has been to us, and the ways he used his gifts in your service.

In this season of grief we pray particularly for Margaret, and their children and grandchildren. Please comfort them and shine the light of your love that they may have the hope that comes from Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christmas at First Church

Kids Christmas Eve:
5:30pm

Midnight Christmas Eve:
11:30pm

Christmas Day
10am

First Church
of Otago

Renovating the Church Building

In January our long-awaited renovations will begin in the church. The project has three key parts: electrical, fire protection and wall work.

1. Electrical

The wiring and switchboard are aged and require replacement. Parts of the wiring to the under-pew heating has failed, as have several of the heaters. We are renewing all of the electrical systems in the church including:

- A new switchboard
- Rewiring the church
- Re-commissioning the under-pew heating
- Replacing the radiant wall heating
- Replacing the lights

2. Fire Protection Systems

The church has two separate fire protection systems, a sprinkler system and an aspirated smoke detection system.

The sprinkler system was recently checked and is in good condition. This system is a heat activated. If the temperature under one of the sprinkler heads reaches a critical point (due to fire) that sprinkler head automatically activates.

The second system is aspirated smoke detection system which takes samples of air from different locations around the church. These samples are analyzed and if smoke is detected the Fire Service is notified. Our aspirated fire system is over thirty years old and has reached the end of its life. Whilst the church is scaffolded for the electrical work, we are taking the opportunity to replace our aspirated detection system.

3. Wall and Window Works

Our recently completed condition assessments indicated that the lath and plaster system on interior west wall of the First Church required further investigation regarding its condition. A scaffold was erected inside the church and inspection holes were made through the lath and plaster. This revealed that the system is failing and requires replacement.

The project will involve removing the existing lath and plaster system and replacing it with a modern alternative that looks identical to the existing system.

Condition assessments have also been completed for all the windows in the church. The north-west window on the wall is in “red” condition, indicating that it is top priority for restoration and repairs. This window will be removed, boarded up, and restored offsite before being reinstalled at the conclusion of the project.

Who is doing the work and how will we pay for it?

The works will be undertaken by a variety of tradespeople and heritage experts, including Otago Electrical and Communications, Braziers Scaffolders, Steve Mowat Building, Otago Stained Glass, Huddleston Construction Systems and Chubbs. The project is being overseen by Origin Consultants and OEC.

Conversations with Heritage New Zealand and the Dunedin City Council Heritage Advisors have been an important part of this process, ensuring that we look after the unique fabric of the church building.

The work is estimated to cost \$570,000 (ex GST). Grants totaling \$239,000 have already been received, and the Deacons Court are awaiting the outcome of several other funding applications. A generous bequest tagged for maintenance on the church building has also been received which will assist in the costs.

The work is scheduled to begin on January 20th, 2025, and be completed by mid May.

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It is important to acknowledge those in the church and in the wider community who have lent their support to help us get to this stage. Thank you must go to Nancy McLeod, Ron Lewis, Glenn Marshall, Ken Foote, Tony Stevely (funding) and the other Deacons, elders and members who have worked so hard on this project.

Church Life during the Renovations

The renovations in our church building represent an opportunity to renovate the life of our church community as we continue to centre our life on Jesus. Just as we draw on skilled tradespeople to undertake work in our buildings, we rely on the Holy Spirit to lead and minister to our life together as a church.

Over the next five months there will be several interruptions to our life together. Some things we can plan for, and some things we will seek God's guidance along the way!

- The Heritage Centre will close in mid January as the work gets underway.
- The church building will be completely unavailable during the renovations.
- Our last worship service in the church will be on January 19th.
- On January 26th, we will gather to worship in Burns Hall.

During our time in Burns Hall, all three congregations will worship together as one. It is a chance to build deeper connection with one another and to deepen our unity in Jesus Christ. Our worship will naturally look different in this space – there are no stain glassed windows, no soaring ceilings and no pipe organ. Yet we will worship our Lord. As Jesus told the lady by the well in John 4, it is not the location that is important. We worship God in spirit and in truth, and we can do that in a neo-gothic masterpiece, on a lawn or in our hall!

A Call to Prayer

It has been exciting to see the different ways that we are growing together as a church. Can you please pray for the church during this time. Specifically, can you pray for our community to grow in Christ, and for smooth renovations in the church.

White Sunday

On Lotu-a-Tamaiti we were greeted with, 'Ia manuia le Aso Sa o tamaiti' which means 'Happy Children's Day.' Thank you to all involved in making this year's celebration another great event.



Our People



Congratulations to Joan who celebrated her 95th birthday in October



... and also to Wilma who celebrated her 80th birthday in September



Rev Ed with Levine and Georgia during the baptism of Aaliyah and Nevada Lale



Outside the church with Ryan and Tiara Nafatali and Rev Alofa, after their confirmation, joined by Aaliyah after her baptism,

Craft Group

We are a small group, meeting fortnightly in the Office Kitchen. and we're generally busy working on items for Operation Cover Up. Some of us knit items for Operation Cover-Up or work on our own projects, or just time to have a chat and a cuppa.

Our final meeting for the year this Thursday 12th December, 10.00am.



Christmas Morning Tea

Everyone is invited to join with us for a Christmas morning tea in Burns Hall after the 10am Church Service on Sunday 15th December 2024.

Please bring a small plate of food to share.

Heather has been busy!
All these lovely items
knitted by her.



Friends of First Church

Unveiling of *The Tree of Life* Sculpture

The unveiling of *The Tree of Life* sculpture took place on Friday, 8 November at 5.00pm. Protected by umbrellas from the rain, a group of over twenty people which included members of the Wilson family, representatives of the Dunedin Sculpture Trust and members of the church community gathered for the occasion.

The sculpture was a gift to First Church of Otago by Philippa Wilson, sculptor, in memory of her mother, Florence Cecilia Wilson (née Silcock), 1929-2024, and her long association with First Church.

The Rev. Ed Masters welcomed everyone, expressed the Church's appreciation of the gift from Philippa, and spoke about the significance of the tree of life as a symbol. Philippa then talked to us about the design and manufacture of the sculpture and how much it meant to her and her family that they were able to honour their mother and her connection with First Church in such a way. The Rev. Alofa Lale, who conducted Florence Wilson's funeral service, concluded the ceremony with a reflection and blessing. We all then retreated from the rain to the main foyer of the Church for light refreshments.

The Friends of First Church assisted by funding the concrete plinth on which the sculpture stands.

The quotation chosen for the bronze plaque is taken from Revelation 22:2: *"On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."*

Elizabeth Wilson
Secretary
Friends of First Church

About the Sculpture

(from Philippa Wilson)

The Tree is laser cut from 8mm mild steel plate. It has been sandblasted, then galvanised for anti-corrosion. After that, it was powder-coated with two coats of a premium architectural paint in the Dulux range. It is a Duratec paint, highly weather resistant to the elements as the Church is close to the harbour and salty air conditions. The colour is called *Gold Ore*.

The Tree was manufactured under a structural engineer's oversight and has been pressure tested with weights and measurements to withstand wind factors of up to 160 knot gale force winds.

The 'Tree of Life' is designed to reflect architectural features of First Church of Otago.

Some key points about the sculpture:

- The hexagonal shape of the concrete plinth reflects the faceted nature of the majestic Church spire.
- The beautiful exterior stone carvings of plants represent a living church and a living God, which are reflected back in 'The Tree of Life' with its leaves and fruits (Revelation 22:2).
- The five boughs of the tree represent the five-fold ministry. The three smaller branches off these represent the Trinity, the Triune God. The lower branches are like open extended arms of welcome ... come.
- The two intersecting flat steel plates create a golden cross.



December Services & Rosters

December 8th

10am Morning Worship—Rev Ed Masters
 Door Stewards—Jean Kirk's team
 Reader—Matthew Hopkins
 TV Remote—Geoff
 Morning Tea—Maria & Andrew
 12noon Cook Islands Service
 2.00pm Samoan Service

December 15th

10am Morning Worship—Rev Ed Masters
 Door Stewards—Glenn Marshall's team
 Reader—Ruth Houghton
 TV Remote—Jean
 Morning Tea—Sue & Rob
 12noon Cook Islands Service
 2.00pm Samoan Service

Combined Morning Tea to follow the 10am Service

December 22nd

10am Morning Worship—Rev Alofa Lale
 Door Stewards—Heather McFarlane
 Reader—Noeleen Williscroft
 TV Remote—Geoff
 Morning Tea—Jean & Chitra

Christmas Services

December 24th—Christmas Eve

5.30pm Kids Carol Service
 11.30pm Midnight Service

December 25th—Christmas Day

10am Combined Service—Rev Ed Masters
 Door Stewards—TBC
 Reader—TBC
 TV Remote—TBC
 Morning Tea—TBC

December 29th

10am Combined Service—Rev Malcolm Gordon
 Door Stewards—Foalima Lemalu's team
 Reader—Lorna Ruffell
 TV Remote—Jean
 Morning Tea—Pam & Matt

Office Hours

Office: Finance & Administration Manager

Monday: 8.00am-1.00pm

Tuesday-Friday: 8.00am-2.30pm

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

027 637 9818

Email ed@firstchurchootago.org

Associate Minister: Rev Alofa Lale

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Email alofa.lale@gmail.com

Associate Minister: Rev Malcolm Gordon

027 476 7603

Email malcolm@firstchurchootago.org

Church Office

477 7150 or 477 7118

Email office@firstchurchootago.org

www.firstchurchootago.org

Meetings

Session	11th December
Deacons	11th December

Holiday Office Hours

The Office will be closed from December 24th, and will re-open on Friday 3rd January.

Ed is on holiday from 26th December to 20th January

Malcolm is on holiday from 30th December to 13th January, and from 20th January to 27th January.