



PLAINS PRESBYTERIAN

3RD MAY 2020



Cling on

But you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day. Joshua 23:8, NIV

Imagine a house full of Christians, divided up in three different rooms. Outside rages a mighty storm which rattles the roof and causes the building to shake on its foundations. In the first room there is a group of Christians who claim to trust God but they are actually in complete denial. They claim God loves them so much that He would never allow such a storm near them. They may even say it's a sunny day outside!

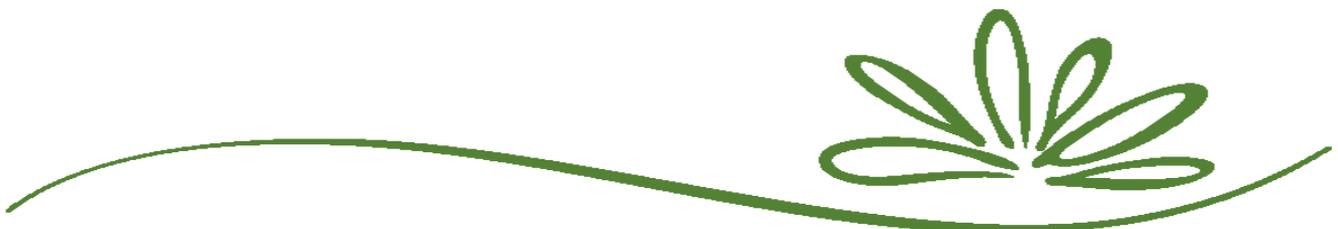
Things are quite different in the second room. These Christians are well aware of the reality of what's going on, but they are also full of fear. They are praying feverishly and are begging God to stop all that is going on. The only thing they focus on in their prayers is for the storm to stop. They might be in reality with regard to the storm, but they are also in fear. In the third room things are completely different again. These Christians are enjoying rich, deep fellowship. They pray and worship God, but there is also time for chatting, fun and even laughter! How did they come to be so relaxed? The answer lies in the fact that this group knows God's presence in the midst of the storm.

God has promised us in His Word that, before Jesus returns, all things will be shaken. There are probably several reasons for Him to do so. But one thing is for sure, when everything that we normally rely on is being shaken, it gives everyone an opportunity to find their security in Him (Hebrews 12:25-29). Before the times of deep uncertainty people might have their entire lives wrapped up in financial security, in having a career, in having relationships, in sports, music or in the pursuit of pleasure. But when these things are being shaken, and uncertainty and fear takes hold of people, will they turn to God?

As Christians we have an incredible opportunity to shine the light of the Gospel of Jesus into a darkened world. I don't believe for a moment that we won't be affected by the storms which batter planet earth. I believe we will be right in the midst of them. But as we walk through increasingly challenging times we have the ability to cling to an unshakeable God, who holds us in His hands.

One biblical truth is that God never lets us go and that we cannot fall out of His hand. Another great truth is that we must do all we can to cling to Him in times of uncertainty. Going back to the little illustration we started with, I want to be like those Christians in the third room of the house. I want to live in reality, but not in fear. I believe this down-to-earth yet heavenly spirituality will draw many people to the light of the Gospel of Jesus in times to come. Let us pray that we may stand firm in the storms and, trusting with all of our hearts, cling to Him.

Peter Brokaar Seeds of the Kingdom



Notices from Alpine Presbyterian Newsletter

COVID-19 Guidelines Monday this week the Government announced the country would move from Level 4 to Level 3 at midnight on 27 April. Full compliance with all government directives issued relating to this level are expected.

For details, please see <https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/alert-level-3/>

As was previously announced on 23 March, all physical gathering for public services of worship in the Presbyterian Church remain suspended until further notice. National PCANZ staff will continue to work from home at Level 3 and can be contacted via email or mobile. Contact details are noted on the PCANZ website.

Communique Last week we referred to a note to all Parish Councils/Sessions/Leadership Teams that we would send out to you all to ponder and consider matters as we think through options and possibilities for our future as church. We will be sending this to you soon. We would graciously ask that you include this in your next leadership meeting and give some time to think and discuss the matters together and then get back to us with your thoughts and reflections.

We do realise that some of your teams might have some challenges communicating at this time when we can't physically meet together so we just ask that you please do your best and let us know, as suggested, in the next month or two. We look forward to hearing from you!

Please Note: Payment of Stipends and salary Anecdotal evidence is being received of situations around NZ where employees, and ministers on stipends, are being encouraged to accept reduced income from their parish. There are also instances of ministers voluntarily offering to forgo part of their stipend and allowances for a time. Our Assembly Executive Secretary, Wayne Matheson, is concerned that employees and ministers may come under undue pressure in relation to this.

Parishes that have applied for the Government Wage Subsidy (where they qualify), should help alleviate concerns in this area. If a parish does not qualify for the wage subsidy, it would suggest that there should be no consideration of reductions in wages or stipends. Wayne draws attention to our Book of Order Chapter 16.9(3) and notes the requirement of congregations to seek presbytery approval before varying the stipend of allowances paid for ministry support. If a congregation cannot pay the stipend previously approved, it must inform the Presbytery along with reasons why it cannot make the payments.

So, please talk to Presbytery if you have any concerns in this matter. We are here to help.

Communication from Council of Assembly re COVID-19 – Financial response Among recent happenings, the Council of Assembly has established a Covid-19 Crisis Financial Response Workgroup to consider what steps the Council could take to assist parishes, presbyteries and Assembly Office deal with the Covid-19 situation. The Workgroup has also produced its first report to Council on 9 April 2020, which contained recommendations under two headings:

- Assembly Assessment
- The ability of Church Property Trustees to release funds from property sales to congregations for the purposes of maintaining ministry and mission – Use of Capital Funds

A memo updating parishes on these matters was sent out last week,

but can also be downloaded here: [CoA Covid-19 Financial Response](#)

Resourcing Our People The Alpine Presbytery Resource Team met today. A story was heard about an older gentleman in a congregation who was supplied with a tablet to connect him with others in our current lockdown period. When the gentleman connected with others he could not stop smiling. Being able to connect with others brought him life. We wonder how many others' lives might be impacted similarly if the resources were available. The Team's understanding is that, for those who remain vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus, their 'lockdown' period may remain longer than those of us who are healthier.

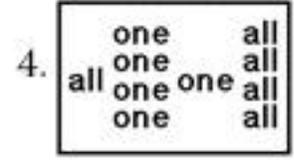
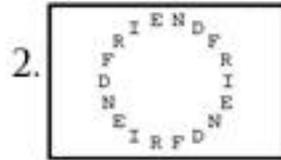
With this in mind we discussed the possibility of a nationwide project to help source a supply of technology (tablets) for those people in faith communities/congregations who currently have none. This will enable them to participate with their church family members, as well as connect them to their families and the wider outside world.

The process required to see this happen would require the following:

1. Ascertaining numbers of tablets required
 2. Sourcing a supplier
 3. Arranging login/emails for people
 4. Install required software i.e. Zoom, Messenger, Skype etc.
 5. Arrange distribution channels
 6. Have local people on the ground to train people in the use of the tablets
- As you can see, this is a pretty big project but if the Ministry of Education can do it what is stopping us?

We are asking our congregations to give us an indication of their interest in participating in this project. Please visit this form <https://forms.gle/qT7NpDUxGskEBPKe6> to let us know whether you have people who may want to acquire a tablet, and also whether you have people available to set-up/distribute/train.

Each of the pictures below represents a common phrase, what are they?



Puzzles © Erich Friedman

How has the lockdown been for you?? *Here are some thoughts from the Parish...*

Hi fellow parishioners at Plains,
 Hope you are keeping well in our lockdown. Strange times.
 We had our first outing out the gate in the car yesterday which was exciting. Strange really to be excited to travel to Methven to get your flu vax! We are so lucky to live in a place with beautiful views and space to walk. Whilst I have missed attending church and catching up with you all it has been great to receive Arii's services, Tais podcasts and services with the Moderator. Are you aware that the Plains Presbyterian Facebook page now has all these services and reflections on it.
 Well done to Miranda and Arii for making it so easy to access.
 Keep well, keep safe, and continue to be kind.
 - Annette Symne

Some words from Fay Cuttriss, Rakaia.
 It has made Norm and I really appreciate the benefits of living in a small town like Rakaia. Who would live in a crowded city in these uncertain times... Rakaia has provided us with more than we need over the past month. The local Four Square delivering our groceries to the door, the day after e-mailing them the order and payment being made by internet banking. Our freedom walks around the neighbourhood, people are eager to talk from a distance or give a friendly wave. The parish bulletin is great. The colour is eye catching and the puzzles interesting - relaxing to do after doing yet more gardening and tidying up outside.
 Have enjoyed Tai's podcasts... very interesting and his voice is so calming and soothing yet still informative. Have not attempted Zoom, we have not had much joy with Skype here so rather hesitant to try Zoom.
 - Fay and Norm

Lockdown Thoughts
 I've tidied drawers and Pantry
 They're really shiny bright.
 And though the Office took a week
 I found the floor last night!
 I've sorted out some photographs
 And Family History too
 A jig saw puzzle took some time
 But now it's finished – phew!
 I've been through Grandma's recipes
 (My cakes don't look like hers!)
 But when I do get something right
 I'm like a cat that purrs.
 I've talked to friends both near and far
 Caught up on all their news.
 The phone now has flat batteries
 and almost blew a fuse!
 But most, I'm so very grateful
 To friends and family
 Who've gathered grocery orders
 And bought them home to me.
 Those folk who are essential
 Deserve highest praise each day
 Doctors, Nurses, Chemists, Grocers
 Give them a shout – Hooray!!
 Thank God for our beautiful Country
 For the scenery and our space
 And a special thanks for Methven
 Our great Community place!
 - Joan Wright

Times of Challenge; God the Shelterer

Life is never smooth sailing. You, God, are in the midst.
 Like a shelterbelt of certainty, you lessen the impact of the storm.
 We know that we shall have good and bad times. farming the land brings risks.
 Help us have faith that believes that you are constantly present, whether in times of chaos or peace.
 In times of pain and celebration, for you are the God of promise and hope.
 In the lee of the trees the air is calmer, quieter, the wind less biting and blustery.
 God of stillness be for us the Spirit of peace that shelters us and breathes life into us.
 Amen



Good Shepherd Sunday, from the book "Seasons of the Land" by Bill Bennett.

One of the Lectionary Bible readings for Sunday May 3. John 10: 1 - 10. The Parable of the Shepherd.

Good Shepherd Sunday can be observed on the second or third Sunday after Easter.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep"

The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Prayer.

Shepherd God, you care for each of us, searching us out, and bringing us into a safe pen.

We praise you for your love, gathering us within the woolshed of your protection.

We praise you, that when we stray you seek us out, rescuing us from the high crags of pride and the deep entanglement of sin.

Direct us along safe tracks and lead us to rich pasture.

We praise you for all who shepherd, who muster and shear, who work the beat overseeing the flocks.

Bring us into your presence,

that we may proclaim your goodness and glorify your name. Amen

Bible Reading; John 10; 1 - 10 Jesus the Good Shepherd



Keeping Connected

Sunday 9.00 am with the Moderator Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio.

A time of Devotion reflecting the Lectionary reading for the day

<https://www.facebook.com/modpcanz/>

Sunday 10:00 am with Dr Rev Tokerau Joseph, Mairangi, Castor Bay Parish

A 30-minute responsive service with singing. <https://youtu.be/BKXvwTAwDro>

Video service, podcast, and Zoom with Rev Arii and Tai

Timaru Presbyterian Parish with Brent and Rory can be sourced through Dorothy.

PRAYER

Father in heaven,

Thank You that we can cling to You and that You and Your kingdom will never be shaken.

Help me to have an increasingly deeper trust in You and may many unbelievers be drawn to You in these times of uncertainty.

Amen.

Peter Brokaar Seeds of the Kingdom

