



PLAINS PRESBYTERIAN

20TH DECEMBER 2020



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Alpine Presbytery From the Presbytery Moderator

I'm writing this message from the beautiful surrounds of Takaka in Golden Bay. Clare & I are here for several weeks assisting with the local Presbyterian Church – a wonderful group of friendly, welcoming people! The bird-song, the surrounding landscapes, the many intriguing places, sights, and sounds are inspiring. It's good to be here!



As we come towards the end of the Advent season and also this curious, unexpected year I find many things to be thankful for...

- ... a mostly 'safe-haven' here in NZ in the world-wide turmoil of Covid-19 (not ignoring the sadness of those who did lose their lives here in NZ);
- ... a strong message to express kindness towards our fellow human beings (I think that's a Jesus-value isn't it?!);
- ... swift adaptation amongst our churches to provide for ongoing worship and connection in new ways (the church at Takaka is an impressive example!) despite the challenges that it brought to many;
- ... a generally 'softer' impact on our economy – despite the dire, media-enhanced warnings (not overlooking that some have been significantly affected!);
- ... a reminder that we are a first-world country and despite the challenges of 2020 we still have MUCH to be thankful for!

We have witnessed many strange and unexpected things happening around our world this past year and one wonders what 2021 will hold for us. I found a recent article from Rob Bell helpful when he said:
"And so each December (though Advent started on the last Sunday of November this year), we enter into a season of waiting, expecting, longing. Spirit meets us in the ache.

We ask God to enter into the deepest places of cynicism, bitterness, and hardness where we have stopped believing that tomorrow can be better than today.

We open up. We soften up. We turn our hearts in the direction of that day. That day when the baby cries His first cry and we, surrounded by shepherds and angels and everybody in between, celebrate that sound in time *that brings our Spirits what we've been longing for.*"

So, so true as we remember the reason for the season!

May this Christmas and Summer season be a time of refreshment and remembering what we can be thankful for. May you allow time for your busy, weary bodies to pause for long enough for your souls to catch up! May you be touched deeply once again by the messages of hope, peace, joy, and love and allow God to remind you that you are deeply loved. May the Spirit lead us into new adventures in the time ahead. After all,... we are the people of the Good News in a world which so needs to hear that message.

God bless you, your families, your faith communities, and your wider communities this 2020 Christmas & Summer season!

Barry Ayers
Moderator – Alpine Presbytery



Love Advent Four (22 December)

We have a Food Bank for all who are in need. Frances (in the rear) is in charge of this new Food Bank in Fiji. She can't grow enough cabbage and tomato on this church land for all those who have limited food options, but she can show them what to do. During Covid-19, it is important for people to eat fresh food to boost their immunity and stay healthy she says. We cannot feed everyone, but we can make them think. We share God's love by giving people seeds to take home and caring for creation. We are hungry for love.

Christian World Service | Christmasappeal.org.nz

Christ Candle Christmas Day (25 December)

Disaster strikes and we come with food
Months later the people of Lebanon are still struggling to recover what they lost with the explosion at the port. They have worked hard to clean up homes and restart businesses. Many people have helped the Lebanese and the refugees who live in their midst with food and other supplies. There is never enough in a country that imports much of its food. Christmas is the day we bring gifts for each other and those who are in need. We pray for all people recovering from disaster. We are hungry for food.



Christian World Service | Christmasappeal.org.nz

Christmas Time

Christmas time is finally here.
It only come but once a year,
And it's a time to spread good cheer
To those we love and hold so dear.

Christmas time is a time of glee,
A time when peace and love run free,
A time for those like you and me
To sit beneath the Christmas tree

Christmas time is a time of joy,
A time to sit back and enjoy
The smile on each girl and boy,
As they play with a Christmas toy.

Christmas time is a time to share
The passing of another year.
Birth of Jesus, a joyful prayer,
To show loved ones how much we care.

Christmas time is a time for song,
A time for us to get along,
To make us feel Lord Jesus strong,
Forgive all those who did us wrong.

Christmas time is a time to pray,
Put love and kindness on display,
Show compassion along the way.
Christmas time should be every day.

By Ronald Doe



Christmas in Summer

Christmas in summer means strawberries and cream, white Christmas lilies and red Pohutukawa blooms. Christmas in summer means juicy black cherries and sweet boysenberries and sugary treats like jelly and ice cream. Christmas in summer means picnics and barbeques, fun filled gatherings with family and friends. Christmas in summer means hiking and biking, celebrating incarnation in the great outdoors. Christmas in summer is a season of joyfulness when the generosity of the earth shows the graciousness of God. Christmas in summer is not a day but a season of joyful praise and prayerful thankfulness for the wonders of creation and the gifts of life. For under the warm sun of a down

under Christmas we remember the gospel beings with the hope and the joy that accompanies a birth.

By Joy Kingsbury-Aitken

At this Christmas season let us bow to the Prince of Peace and forget our selfish cares. Let us be joyful, friendly, faithful, hopeful, and loving. Let us give thanks for all our blessings and share with others our hopes and our prayers. Through God's grace we will attain this peace this year. 🙏

This week, our Carew folks had our last service for the year 2020. It was lovely to chat with some of you on how you were going to celebrate Christmas with your love ones.

We are so fortunate and blessed in our country to be able to move around in our family and community circles to spend Christmas with. The reality in other parts of our world, are still having to deal with covid19 with restrictions and monitor bubbles.

Please pray for these countries whose people are longing to connect with their love ones. Whose love ones are in hospital because of covid and whose love ones have died because of covid. This is a festive season, of looking forward and giving thanks for the Saviour, who is born to us in this time that seems hopeless.

Enjoy time with love ones and friends. Celebrate and share the love of God, the Father, that has been with us, through the reminder of Jesus birth that we find, as believers, our HOPE in. Let us pray.

Prayer

Gracious God,

We remember other parts of our world whose Christmas season of celebrating the coming of Jesus as a baby, is the last thing on their minds. Dealing with loss, struggles and suffering, shine your light of love through the giving and support of charity and aid. Help governments to attend to the wellbeing of all who cannot cope emotionally and physically. May the church, and believers, extend help by encouraging, supporting, sharing and caring. Let your blessings flow so that the joy of your goodness be felt and give them inner peace.

This our prayer for this season of "good tidings"

Amen.

-Arii



On Reflection by Maggie Ingall. Adapted by Dorothy [For the New Year] something to reflect on.

Happy New Year! Just now, as the carols and Christmas music begin to fade, I frequently find myself humming a different song - one that might seem to have nothing to do with this time of the year at all.

Even though it's not exactly seasonal, it's still a joyful anthem, written by Jerry Herman, and called "The Best of Times" What has it to do with the arrival of another year?

It's because I'm sure that most of us New Year is not just about staying up for the midnight chimes, the singing of Auld Lang Syne, the traditional fruit cake or even the fireworks.

The coming of another year inevitably promotes thoughtfulness.

On that night we look back over the past twelve months and take stock of what they brought us.

For most of us the Covid Illness has troubled the whole world. Did the weather bother you, farmers up in the North Island had to deal with severe droughts. No overseas holidays, in fact Lockdown restrictions for many caused disruptions. Yes, what an awful year it was! Wait a moment - didn't Lockdown bring to many a restful time, the autumn weather we experienced during that time was great. We got through it and everyone in New Zealand [most] learnt to work as a team. All in all, are we sorry to see this year go by, but as the New Year draws near, shouldn't we be looking forward, not back? What about being prepared, making resolutions, deciding that in 2021 we will organize our lives much better?

We will give up sugar; refuse to indulge in gossip; be kind and patient no matter how provoked - in fact, turn into a new and better person. Well, we can try!! The fact is that whatever happened in 2020 it has gone. With luck it has left us some happy memories, but we can't have those days back, nor change anything that happened..

The future? Though it's excellent to have good intentions, the final control is beyond us. Which leaves us the only thing we truly possess. The present. That in turn brings me back to the song, and its timely lyrics, reminding us that the best of times is actually right now.

"Now - not some forgotten yesterday. Now - tomorrow is too far away.

So, hold this moment fast and live and love. As hard as you know how,

And make this moment last, Because the best of times is now."

So here's to a Happy Right Now - and may there be many more to come!

Wishing you all a blessed peaceful Christmas then you can reflect on the New Year.



St. Andrew's Rakaia

Our programmes have ended for the year. Rakaia Fit Kidz & Steady As You Go will see you next year. Thanks for a great year!

Hope to see you all **at St. Andrew's Rakaia for 'IT'S CHRISTMAS' Friday 18/12 4:40pm-7:30pm** Craft time, baking, cookie decorating. Free community meal and Christmas music with the All Nations Band.

Congratulations to Josivini Yoabale, Lai and Ilise's daughter who has been awarded the role of one of the leaders for the Rakaia School 2021. Well done, we at St Andrews are very proud of your achievement.

St. John's Methven

Reminder for Christmas Workshop Sharing on Friday 18th 10:00 am -11:00 am at St John's Methven. All welcome! Just let Gill know gjapcm@gmail.com and give her the children's names and ages and how many more for the share session.

December Services			
20 th	9:30 am	St. Andrew's Rakaia	Rev. Aarii
	10:30 am	St. John's Methven	Rev. Neville Burns
	7:00 pm	Staveley	Community Christmas Carols
	7:00 pm	Methven	Community Christmas Carols
24 th	7:00 pm	St. Andrew's Rakaia	Christmas Eve with Marty
	7:00 pm	Mayfield	Rev. Aarii; Christmas Eve Choir
	8:30 pm	St. John's Methven	Christmas Eve Worship Team
25 th	9:30 am	St. John's Methven	Rev. Aarii Christmas Day
27 th	10:30 am	St. John's Methven	Rev. Aarii



Wishing you peace, love, and laughter in the new year.

This will be the last issue of Plains Presbyterian Newsletter for the year. See you next year. For now, stay connected with us on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#).