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**The Season of Lent**

"Is not this the fast that I choose?" God you inspired the prophet to write: Is not this the fast that I choose; to lose the bonds of injustice... to let the oppressed go free? God we cry out for those suffering injustice, those falsely accused and wrongly convicted. Send champions and argue their case, bring truth to light that they may go free. God we cry out for those suffering imprisonment for their political ideas or their religious beliefs. Replace corrupt dictators with honest leaders who will let the prisoners  of conscience go free.

God you inspired the prophet to write: s not this the fast that I choose...To share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless poor into your house?"

God we cry out for those suffering hunger, those starving because of famine and war, Let us who are rich give generously to the poor while addressing the causes of climate change and conflict. God we cry out for those without shelter, the rough sleepers forced to dwell on the streets. Help us provide sufficient warm and safe shelters for all  folk to have a good place to call home.

God you inspired the prophet to write: "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted then your light shall arise in the darkness and ... the LORD will guide you continually.

God this Lent we remember that Jesus came bringing good news to the poor proclaiming release to the captives and freedom for all who are oppressed.

God this Lent grant to us a heart of compassion like Jesus and show us how to bring prosperity to the impoverished, attain justice and liberation for the unlawfully imprisoned and provide comfort and aid to the afflicted and oppressed.

God may our fasting this Lent be the fasting you desire of our actions being a blessing for all we encounter. May our fasting this Lent lead to radical self-giving: God guide us into living the way Jesus taught. *Amen*

Based on Isaiah 58: 6 - 11:  Luke 4: 18, written By Joy Kingsbury- Aitken

**Lectionary Reading For Sunday 7th March** One of the lectionary bible readings for this Sunday is from John 2; 13 - 22 Jesus Goes to the Temple.In December I purchased a book  "Let your Light Shine Through", collected Sermons, creative Worship Volume 2 written by Philip Garside. Philip used to have a Epworth Bookshop in Wellington where leaders of Christian Education in the schools obtained their resources. So, I had that contact with him and from time to time brought the odd book. This book, I thought would be helpful in preparing church services, but I have found it to be a really interesting collection of sermons, well researched and very easy to understand.

Philip's understanding of John 2 reading, (briefly) is as follows. Sermon dated 11th March 2012.

Keeping Jesus Alive in our Hearts.

Jesus' defiant act of cleansing the Temple, described in the reading from John's gospel, is, for me, a pivotal point in the Easter story. Jesus deliberately provoked the Jewish authorities and gave them no choice but to act decisively against him. It gave them the excuse they needed to present Jesus to Pilate, as a threat to civil order and to Rome, and force Pilate to act. The story of cleansing the Temple is unusual, in that it appears in all 4 New Testament gospels. Scholars call this multiple attestation. A story which appears in several documents is considered more likely to be factual, to have happened. I'm convinced that it did, and Jesus planned it to bring matters to a head. Jesus' anger and moral outrage is directed not against the traders as individuals but against the system they are part of and those in power who perpetuate it. The Temple should only have been used for worship and religious ceremonies. The season of Lent moves from preparation and study to the tragedy of Good Friday, the expectant hush of Sunday and on the glorious celebrations of the risen Christ on Easter Day.

Philip, quote his words, I'm a product of today's rational and scientific age, and to me some of this stuff sounds unlikely, I have doubts. Doubt keeps me on my toes, stops me being complacent about my religion, compels me to look for answers and think more deeply"

Philip certainly questions a lot of bible stories, old and new testaments. I am not offended, I have learnt a lot, the book is just very informative, pick up and put down, one sermon a day if you wish.

Philip Garside Publishing Ltd.  bookspgpl@gmail.com  $35.00 Reviewed by Dorothy.

**The Rubbish Challenge:
10 Steps to Less Waste in 10 Months Current Step) ​March: MEASURE**

**Bible verse |** There is lots of counting in the Bible; think of some and look them up. Counting helps us take notice of reality. Jesus invited people to be fully aware of what was going on: “blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.” (Matthew 13:16)

**‘Big Idea’ |** To read a map you need to know where you are. Measure your rubbish to set a baseline. Then you can set goals and measure progress.

**Questions for reflection & discussion |** Take a good hard look at the rubbish that we produce. Find out more about waste issues in your city.Do you think you personally put too much in the bin? What are you already trying to do to reduce land-fill waste?

**Action Step for March |** Measure your rubbish. Choose a period (2 or 4 weeks). Make up a chart for each type of rubbish. Notice what is in each bin – what was in the wrong bin? - <https://www.conversations.net.nz/rubbish-challenge.html>

**St. Andrew’s Rakaia**Tuesday 9th March
11:30 am | **Rakaia Friendship Gathering** at St Andrew's Hall.

*"Theme"* An early St Patrick's Day Celebration. Jokes Welcomed. Social time, stall and raffle, Dinner and entertainment with Natalie, Karen, and Irene. Sing a Long to some Irish Songs.  Welcome all.
Wednesday 10th March
10:30 am | **Rakaia Fit Kids** | *A time for friendship, fun, and support. Welcome to all pre-school children.*
 1:00 pm | **Steady As You Go** | *Balance, strengthening and gentle exercises for senior folk's health and well-being.*.

**St. John’s Methven
St John’s Focus Group met this week**. A number of pastoral concerns and visits were reported.

Jayne is following a Lent study with the Sunday School children and the Brick Club is getting started.

*Anyone willing to give Jayne a helping hand on Friday after school would be welcomed.*

Report from Governance Council: A constructive meeting chaired by Annette Syme in Arii’s absence.

Presbytery Visitation/Review to take place soon. We need to re-visit our Plains Parish Memorandum of Understanding to review a number of matters.

Arrangements made for Communion on Sunday and shared lunch to follow.

Ecumenical World Day of Prayer at All Saints 7 pm on Friday

Good Friday Walk of Witness begins at Lady of the Snows at 9:30am and will finish at St John’s with Service at 10:00 am

Anzac Day Community Service is on Sunday 25th April and will commence at 9:30am at the Memorial Gates on McDonald Street and the Service will commence at 10 a.m. at the Mt. Hutt Memorial Hall.

*There will be no Service at St. John’s on Anzac Day*

Harvest Thanksgiving will be combined with All Saints on 2nd of May.

We are grateful to Marilyn Burrows who is willing to take over the Envelope System recording.

As it was Alan and Adrienne’s last meeting with us before they move to Ashburton we wished them well for their move and thanked them for all the time and effort they have put into their work with our Focus Group for many years. Elsa gave Adrienne a Lemon Tree for their new garden – *there is a spot waiting for it!* - Joan Wright


**World Day of Prayer Services**
Friday 5th March at 5:00 pm | Rakaia Combined Churches at St Ita's Church
Friday 5th March at 7:00 pm | Methven Combined Churches at All Saints Church
Country of Study. Vanuatu. "Build on a Strong Foundation" prepared by the WDP Committee of Vanuatu. *All welcome to attend, folk finishing work in Rakaia, just come as you are.*

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| **March Sunday Services** |
| **7th**  | **10:30 am** | St. John’s Methven | Rev. Arii; CommunionParish Service |
| **14th** | **9:30 am** | St. Andrew’s Rakaia | Rev. John Titlow |
|  | **10:30 am** | St. John’s Methven | Rev. Arii |

[**Prayer**](https://www.conversations.net.nz/rubbish-challenge.html)

Dear God, if only we could throw away everything we do not want. If only stuff would disappear, from our homes, from our relationships, from the planet. like … (pause to name things you would like less of).

Dear God. We confess to you our rubbish - the junk we buy, the rubbish things we say and do. Forgive us, God of infinite grace. Have mercy on us. Amen.