



# Nativity News



*Advent 2018*



## THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S SEASONS

Nothing in God's plan stays the same. We are reminded of this every time we consider the mighty oak tree that lives with us here at Nativity.

From precious small beginnings new life springs. God gives us new life, new beginnings, and through his care and nurturing great things will grow. None of God's creation stays the same – it flourishes and grows, and in its time, it will change yet again and evolve into whatever purpose God has chosen for it.

The same goes for us and the leaders God has given us in our diocese and church - all are growing and changing in accordance with God's plan.

We have been blessed to have had leaders at Nativity who have loved us and led us with their love:

**Bob and Libby** – leaving us to follow the path God has laid out for them.

**Bishop Richard** – retiring after leading us, first at Nativity, then as our Bishop of the Nelson Diocese.

**John Neal** – after recently celebrating fifty years of ordained ministry continues to serve at Nativity where his spiritual roots were planted many years ago.

As we reflect on our lives, we can see how God's perfect plan unfolds for us, just as it does all around us. We give thanks for His prevailing in the seasons of our lives and in His world.





## FROM BOB AND LIBBY

Dear Nativity family and friends

In 1965 'The Byrds' made famous Pete Seeger's song "Turn, Turn, Turn". Over the years following, many covers were made by other groups. The lyrics are adapted word-for-word from the English version of verses 1-8 of the third chapter of the biblical Book of Ecclesiastes.

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven"*

Life is full of growth and hope, but we also find regrets for what has finished. At this time of year, heading toward Christmas and a new year, we celebrate the newness of everything around and ahead of us. Indeed, the cycle of nature will always renew and refresh after the winter. Libby and I too have our own cycles – road bikes and off-road bikes - and we love using them around Marlborough!

However, there's a cycle of life that has come for Libby and me a little quicker than we expected. At the start of November, we made this announcement at the end of each service:

*"In consultation with the Bishop and Parish Wardens, Libby and I believe we have led Nativity as far as we are able. Therefore, with very sad hearts we tell you, I have tendered my resignation as Vicar of Nativity, to the Bishop. It seems that it needs someone with a different skill set and giftings to lead Nativity into the next stage of Parish Life ... I plan to take a month's annual leave in January and will take three months sabbatical from February to the end of April."*

Libby added: *"As Bob said, our hearts are very sad ... God has never let us down. He has an exciting future for Nativity that he's already hinted at through Bob and the leadership, and God has an exciting future for us too that we are seeking him about constantly. We don't know what the future holds for us, but we know the one who holds the future, and that's a very good start."*

It's not that we want to leave. We don't. It's that we have loved being part of this Parish, and like raising kids, part of the care is knowing when it's time to get out of the way.

Another hard cycle has impacted our staff as Vestry grappled with many years of deficit budgets and a big deficit budget in 2019. "As it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever" only applies to the glory of God, not us, not the church, nor the things we do even in church. Do you remember when guitars in church were disapproved of? Or when only the clergy and specially licensed lay people led the worship? How things have changed indeed!



The scenery is changing around us as it always has with the onset of a new season. Our God alone is constant. Remember these things – but don't look back. God's grace and peace be with you, through all the changing scenes of life.

God bless you.



## EDITORIAL BY ROSE FRANCIS

The word 'Advent' comes from the Latin word for "Coming." For Christians, this is the season when we prepare for the coming of infant Jesus at Christmas; as well as Jesus' promised Second Coming. Advent is the time that Christians wait in expectation.



Advent is the beginning of the church year. It starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas; celebrating the truth about God, and His revelation in Christ; through whom all Creation might be reconciled to God. May we be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us as His followers.

Advent symbolizes the spiritual journey, not only of individual people, but congregations; as they affirm Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power.

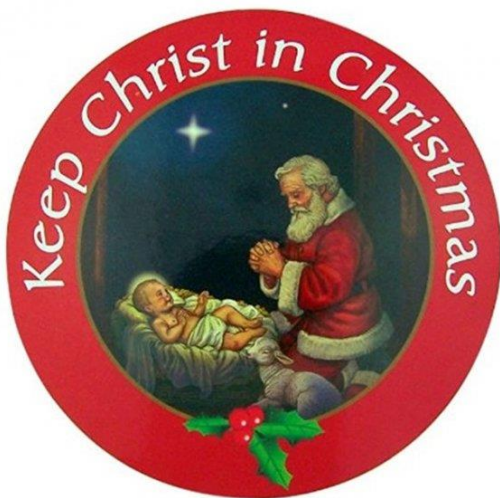
This is our season of change as we 'Spring into Summer.' We watch plants awaken and grow, flourishing in warmer weather and reaching heavenward. We delight in young birds and animals gaining independence from their mothers. We are refreshed by longer days and invigorated to achieve more of our personal goals.

So too with our Church. This is our season of change, and growth. We are planning repairs and earthquake strengthening of our buildings. Let us not be anxious if comfortable routines are changed, or familiar faces take on new challenges. God has our Nativity family, and all His children, in the palm of His hand. We can trust Him and face the future with anticipation as He guides us through this new season of our lives.

As Christmas approaches, may we reach out beyond our families to share our good news and hospitality with lonely or deprived people around us. Jesus's coming brings the light of love into this world. Let us reflect His light into the world!



May God bless you all this festive season.





## PETER AND JENNY OLIVER – A TESTIMONY

In days gone by, many people grew up, married and died in the place they were born, surrounded by family who were there in good times and bad.

However, the extended family has long ago been replaced by the nuclear family. Few of our friends have children living in Blenheim, or indeed New Zealand in many cases.

So, what happens when things go wrong? Well, about four years ago Peter and I found out. Unexpectedly we were both made redundant on the same day.

We had no family living here to offer support and in our late 50's with ageism alive and well, there was a real possibility that we wouldn't find work in Blenheim – or anywhere.

Our saving grace? Our church family – the house group we had belonged to for many years. We had all had our ups and downs but we had been there for each other. Now they offered prayer, practical and moral support for us.

So, despite everything, we never shed a tear. Somehow, we felt it was part of God's plan and that something would turn up. It was hard at the time but looking back we actually feel it was quite a positive experience in many ways. We became creative at using things in our cupboards and freezer. We cancelled subscriptions to things we didn't really need. We were suddenly time rich!

The latest census shows 50% of the population no longer associate themselves with a religion. We are so grateful that we had a church family who cared about us, made us feel loved at a time when our self-esteem was dented and celebrated when we found new jobs.

At a time when there are so many people living away from friends and whanau, there is an increasing need for a place to belong with a group of people who care.



Being introduced at the Seniors Lunch



...to Jessica, Jonathan and Lucy on the safe arrival of Peter William Wasley.



THE BABY JESUS STARTS TEETHING.

## GOD'S PLAN BEING OUTWORKED IN THE LIVES OF JOHN AND PAM NEAL



It is all Billy Graham's fault. He was having his NZ Crusade in 1959 and a link from Auckland to a huge loudspeaker in the Marlborough College Assembly Hall, brought his voice within earshot. I have no idea what he said but I do remember that he painted before me a fork in the road ahead and invited, no, challenged *me* to choose the road less travelled and to follow Jesus. After a big struggle within, I walked forward to the strains of the hymn *Just as I am* and began that walk which changed my whole life.

Seven years later, in January 1966, I climbed out of my dirty overalls for the last time, said farewell to my boss and workmates where I had worked as an apprentice and (eventually) Journeyman Diesel Mechanic, and with all my stuff crammed into my old Ford Consul drove to Auckland to begin my theological studies at St John's College. While the academic life was very novel to this farm boy turned mechanic, it was also very hard to knuckle down to being a full-time student.

The drudgery of lectures, seminars and exams were enlivened by lots of adventures, chief of which was persuading Bishop Sutton to let me marry a young lady I had been courting for six years, and so Pam and I were married in Nativity Church in November 1967. A year later, on Advent Sunday 1968, I was Ordained Deacon in Nelson Cathedral with Paul Dyer (Richard's brother).

If life at College was a challenge, turning my collar around and commencing full-time ministry as a Curate in Stoke was an even greater challenge for this very under-confident, chronically shy boy. However, given God's courage and the wise, quiet mentoring of my Vicar Bob Hughes, I settled into the lifestyle with Pam at my side. Our daughter Carol was born while we were at Stoke. Then, in December 1970, having sold nearly everything we had, to buy the tickets, we sailed out of Wellington for New York before traveling on into Canada where we spent the next nearly six years in Quebec, *La Belle Province*. For most of this time we lived in the small village of Harrington Harbour 300 miles from the end of the road and where I used a plane to travel around the very isolated small communities of St Clement's Mission.

Returning to NZ in late 1975 we lived in Westport for the next five years where I was the Vicar before being appointed Vicar of Highfield in Timaru in 1980, a large, multi-staff parish where a succession of Curates included such names as those of Michael Hawke and Richard Ellena! Then followed 23 years as an RNZAF chaplain, where we served at Wigram for four years, Ohakea for a further four before being posted to Woodbourne where we remained except for just over two years in Wellington when I was appointed the Principal Defence Chaplain. Air Force life gave me two trips to London, one to Egypt and ended with a four-month operational deployment to the peacekeeping contingent in the Solomon Islands. We retired, if that is the word, to Blenheim mid-2009.

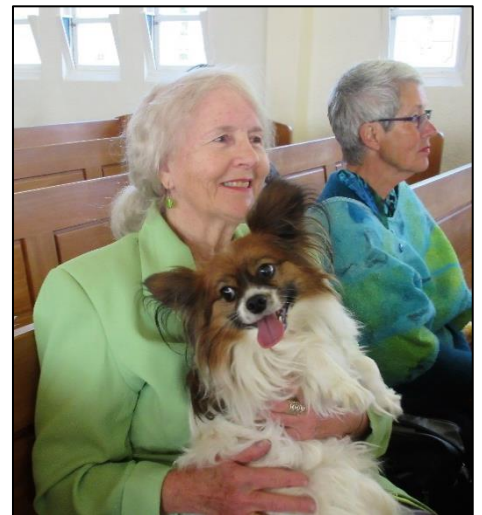
What of those 50 years? There have been impassioned debates which have threatened the Anglican Church in NZ; about the remarriage of divorced people and the ordination of women which were equally divisive; as is the current issue. And of course there have been changes, lots of changes from the way we dress (I was evicted from one of my first Diocesan Synods because I did not wear a jacket!) to the format of services and to other changes as we wrestle with the need to relate the Christian Faith to a secular society which thinks and acts very differently to that of the 1960s. Our challenge remains to relate our faith to our everyday lives and to so live that faith that people are drawn to Jesus. Our lives are very different from when we lived those years ago, but our human needs remain constant and the message of God's love and grace shown to us in Jesus Christ continues to be the one (One) answer to those needs. And to God be all the glory.

*John and Pam Neal*





# NATIVITY CHURCH BLESSING OF PETS SERVICE







**ROSEMARY FRANCIS – TESTIMONY OF HEALING** For more than 9 years I have been trying to hide severe depression beneath colourful clothes. Truth is, the horror of thousands of Canterbury earthquakes and aftershocks, while caring for my dying husband and our farm animals; plus, injury from the killer quake, caused me to suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. While still clinging to God, I could not control sheer physical and mental responses to continuing terror. Shamefully, I was living in defeat of being overcome with nightmares and terror, while grieving for my husband, home and livestock- even after moving to Blenheim, with my cats, dogs and doves. Survivor's guilt, plus cowardice of quitting my broken life pulled me even lower. Then injury in the Seddon quake robbed me of vision in one eye and the other one has deteriorated considerably. This has limited my creative output of painting and crafting.

Ironically, I have been on Sidesperson Duty every time Nativity Church has had earthquake drills, and I've been a warden to help people evacuate safely and calmly. Having been involved in real evacuations and injuries, this was a challenge; but with God's help I was able to concentrate on helping others.

Our recent quake evacuation exercise saw the congregation standing out on the green grass, with our backs to our damaged church. We had Holy Communion with golden Kowhai trees waving in the gentle breeze. Birds sang, and all Creation was praising God. He impressed on me the challenge of returning to Canterbury to face the brokenness of my beloved birthplace.

Last month, thanks to kind friends who cared for my animals, I was able to make that trip. My only living sibling, my younger sister, took me to face my grief at the old CTV building, where two of my friends were killed among 100 others. I prayed in the Transitional Cathedral, built on the site of St Johns, Latimer Square, where we were married, and where our parents' funerals were held. We sat in the 185 white chairs that honour the 185 killed in the second big quake in 2011. We walked along the Avon River through the Red Zone, stretching miles from city to Brighton Beach. We took a tram ride through the city, and cable car to the summit of the Port Hills to look down on Lyttelton, and Banks Peninsula where we farmed for many happy years. We skirted Redcliffs, where there are still barriers to protect people from unstable rockfalls; and Sumner where we used to be active in Surf Lifesaving. We went to see our old homes and churches, schools, Teachers' College and University. We cleaned up our family graves.

Among the rubble and fearful memories of Canterbury, I found signs of hope and regrowth. We picnicked in the beautiful Botanic Gardens, under a grand old tree we used to climb. We wandered along the daffodil-and bluebell covered Avon River bank and visited all the sites where my favourite buildings have been demolished. There were lots of tears, but healing has begun. I have released my grief to our merciful God, and He has revealed to me that there is a new chapter of my life, following the destruction of all my childhood security.

God has promised that "His strength is made perfect in our weakness." I know that, of myself, I could not overcome the fear of quakes. Now, having given God all those terrors and traumas, I am grateful to be living free of anti-depressants and tranquilisers. God has provided such medication, and medical advisors to help us to cope with sickness of our bodies and minds. I thank Him for the way I've been helped through these difficult years coping with PTSD. I still have trouble sleeping and pray God will help me with this too.

I left Canterbury, and as the plane circled over my broken city, a dark cloud of grief lifted. The sun shone, as I moved away from my past life and flew up to Matamata to spend time with my son Tim's lovely, lively family. It felt as if I was being carried from death to life, from damaged roots to growing wings, while I move forward with my loving heavenly Father. As the psalmist wrote, we "walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death." It is a tough journey, but grief is not a destination. Even though my sight is so poor now, with God's grace, I will "walk by faith, not by sight." Thank you, Lord! I claim your promise that You "will never leave me or forsake me" In faith, I will face the unknown future, knowing that you are with me at all times

## A GLIMPSE INTO KEVIN AND SHERYLL GWYNNE'S PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND, JORDAN AND GREECE

*Kevin writes..... (Abridged)* If you have drawn up a bucket list, then it's a good idea to tick off a couple of your desires and dreams. You won't regret it, and it may even let you in for a few surprises and exciting times. Well that's certainly been our recent experience as we embarked on a month-long trip to the Holy Land, Jordan, and Greece.

It was truly a trip of a lifetime! Our tour was led by my long-time friend and colleague The Very Rev Mike Hawke, Dean of Nelson Cathedral, and his wife Patsy. This adventure was officially entitled a Pilgrimage, as we followed in the footsteps of Jesus, Moses, St. Paul, and St. John. It was more than a sightseeing trip, but rather experiencing the places where they had all walked, talked, taught, and ministered.

Our group of twenty-five was as one would expect, a diverse group from across the country - literally - from Auckland to Invercargill! Soon we all became friends as we spent the next month travelling, worshipping, praying, studying, and playing, together. We had lots of fun and laughter along the way. Every morning we began with a couple of songs of worship, (Mike took his guitar everywhere we went) and often along our journey as we stopped at places of Biblical historical importance, we would read appropriate passages of the Bible. This made it come alive like never before, in an unimaginable way, as here we were, in the very places where we were reading about. Our hearts jumped for joy!



Kevin on camel in Arabian desert.



Palm Sunday road overlooking Jerusalem



Sea of Galilee



St John's Cave in Patmos.



Kevin and Matthew in Biarritz.



Kevin and Sheryll

We flew onto France where we spent ten days with our eldest son Matthew, who for the past five years has been working in Biarritz as a missionary, ministering with YWAM. (Youth With A Mission). All thanks to God!



## NATIVITY ALBUM OF ACTIVITIES

Bernadine Gibson is confirmed by Bp. Richard



Fathers' Day at Church



Walking the Labyrinth at the Winter Retreat



Taize Service in St. Barnabas



Everyone was invited to wear a 'touch of red' at the Red Alert Dinner





'Sunday Sing' led by the Salvation Army Band.  
Peter McMillan on organ.



Sunday Sing – A celebration of timeless Hymns and Gospel songs – a Combined Churches



Spring Flower Festival



## KAITERITERI FAMILY SUMMER CAMP



Spanky Moore is a humorous and talented communicator who has been wrestling with what faithful discipleship looks like in our current cultural circumstances. His theme this year is 'Information' - you will not want to miss hearing what he has to say!

The camp has a 'laid back' family holiday feel to it. There is time at the beach, some teaching, programmes for kids, songs of praise and shared main meals. The whole weekend becomes an excellent opportunity to spend quality time hanging out with each other.

If you are interested, please contact [Jonathan@nativity.org.nz](mailto:Jonathan@nativity.org.nz) or 027 8580656 to let him know. Jonathan is helping liaise with the camp to make sure accommodation is sorted well. There are four main types of accommodation: cabins, dormitories, caravan and tent sites.

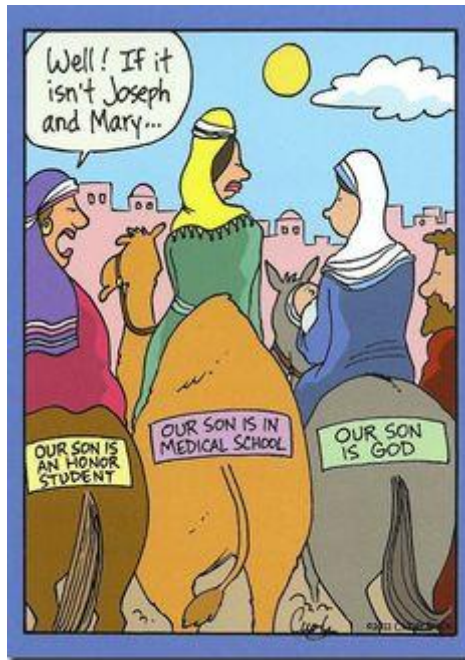
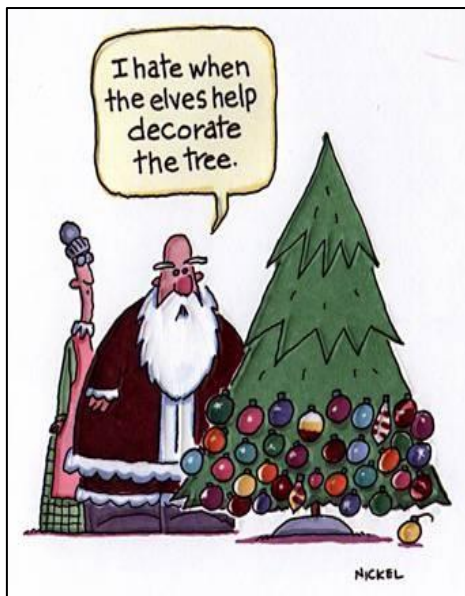
Please talk to Jonathan if you plan to go or would like a printed registration form which you can pick up from Nativity church office. **Registrations close early Feb however in order to get your preferred accommodation options please register and contact Jonathan as soon as you are able.**

**Camp costs are:** Single \$80, Couple \$100, Family \$140, Day Visitor \$30 per day. Please read registration form fully for more detail.

**There is no age limit, no one is too young or too old!**

We look forward to seeing you there

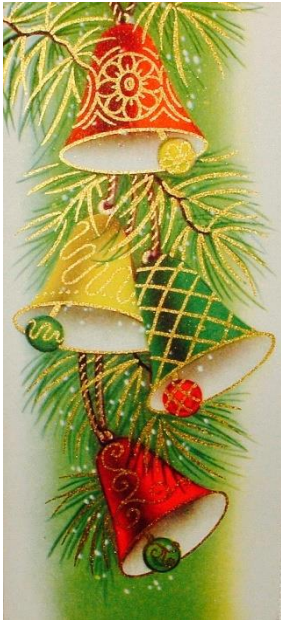




## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERVICES

- 2nd Dec** 8am & 10am 'The Displacement' at Nativity church  
**9th Dec** 8am & 10am 'A Journey to Safety' at Nativity  
 1pm **Christmas in the Park at Pollard Park**  
 (Last week of our 5:30pm Canvas service)  
**13th Dec** 5pm Christmas Festival at Blenheim CBD  
**16th Dec** 8am & 10am 'Joy on the Journey' at Nativity  
 7pm **Nine Lessons in Carols at Nativity**  
**23rd Dec** 8am & 10am 'Home is on the Horizon' at Nativity  
**24th Dec** 8am & 10am 'Welcome Home!'  
**Christmas Eve service at Nativity**  
**25th Dec** 8am & 10am 'Family Reunion'  
**Christmas Day services at Nativity**





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**SUNDAY SERVICES:**

**8.00 am - Traditional Eucharist Service**

**10.00 am - All Age Worship Service**

**5.30 pm – ‘Canvas’ in the Hall – In recess during holidays**

**10.00 am - Children & Youth programmes – In recess during holidays**

***See previous page for Christmas Services and upcoming events***

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