

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness  
has not overcome it.

John 1:5

# *Nativity* NEWS

**APRIL 2021**

Issue 18



## EDITORIAL BY ROSE FRANCIS

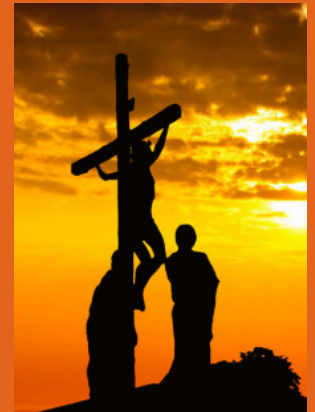
*God's abundance is all around us as we harvest fruit, nuts, grains, veges and herbs from our land of rich blessings. Glorious autumnal colours flutter down around us, as gentle reminders that our times are in God's capable hands. Seasons change, as we observe old things passing away, and new things beginning. Sometimes we're uneasy about changes to the familiar routines and people we're comfortable with. Scripture reminds us that 'to everything there is a season, at a time God chooses.' (Ecclesiastes 5.) So, we walk together through Holy Week, remembering the events of that first Easter which turned anxious and fearful disciples into bold witnesses of Jesus' sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. It was a week that changed history and brought life and hope to us all. Thank you, God, for your love and generosity.*

*This issue of Nativity News also speaks of change. We have an energetic and focused new vicar and his family to challenge us and teach us. We have a new parish nurse who will offer support and advice, especially to our senior members. And after a year of disruptions from Covid outbreaks, we can hope for a return to more freedom as the new vaccine offers protection from this destructive virus. It is time to set about rebuilding a broken world! There are many who need our help, both locally and abroad. Jesus reminds us to help the needy and distressed, that "inasmuch as you do it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you do it for Me."*

*Nativity church has a new vestry ready to plan steps for major improvements to our buildings, as we seek God's guidance and move forward in faith. We care for God's house to show our respect. Vicar Glen has been speaking through his sermons on 'Rebuilding from the Ruins'. His words are a timely reminder that all Christians should be working towards preserving and helping Creation to flourish as God intended it to, as well as rebuilding relationships with each other so we have a healthy legacy to leave for future generations.*

*We share the brave testimony of Jacinda, one of our whanau, and her journey of bringing the truth into the light. Participating in the Diocesan Health and Safety studies, which are thorough, will help to ensure the safety of all children and vulnerable people in our care. Nativity is committed to working through past failure and to "walk in the light, as He is in the light." Please support our leadership as Nativity moves forward through this season of change and adjustment.*

*Every struggle we face shapes who we are today. Let us ask the Lord to help us to be thankful even in the tough times, and pray that God will give us the strength to be faithful to him in the midst of difficult times. We can "walk through the valley of the shadow" and, with Jesus as our guide, emerge into pure Son-light with Him.*



Lord the light of your  
love is shining  
In the midst of the  
darkness shining  
Jesus  
Light of the World  
shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth  
you now bring us  
Shine on me  
Shine on me

Shine Jesus shine  
Fill this land with the  
Father's glory  
Blaze Spirit blaze  
Set our hearts on fire  
Flow river flow  
flood the nations with  
grace and mercy  
Send forth your Word  
Lord, and let there  
be light







**Rev'd Glen Ashworth**

**I thought for my first piece in Nativity News it would be good to start with introductions. For those who were at my induction, apologies for repetition. There are a host of great articles in this edition and I won't be offended if you skip to them now...**

Born in Wellington, I was raised by my mother, my step father and my mum's family. Only 6 months into my first year at school, we moved 400km north where my father had bought into a partnership of a Geothermal Tourist Resort called Orakei Korako. This was where I was to spend my childhood and right through to my late teens.

The 'sights' were situated right on the Waikato river, so I grew up swimming and water skiing and along having a beach house on the east coast, fishing was a big part of my life.

My mother owned a dance studio and taught ballroom, ballet and jazz ballet and my father ran the business. Having some of my extended family moved to nearby Taupo was great, especially for me as an only child.

My wife Sarah grew up in a small town south of Auckland called Waiuku. Her parents purchased a fruit orchard when Sarah was 5 years old and moved out from Auckland to run it. After working overseas, Sarah moved to Taupo to teach. We met and after 3 years of marriage, decided to move to Auckland to pursue my sense of call to church ministry.

Since then I have journeyed on to be an Anglican Priest but having become a Christian in an alive Baptist church, I would describe myself as an Anglo-Baptist Charismatic. I love the richness of Anglican worship and the encouragement to develop an intellectual and holistic faith. I love discussing faith, figuring out with others what it means to follow Jesus. I love seeing people connect with God and building a community where the gospel message is lived out and shared with others.

I am an extrovert and love hanging out with people and I enjoy a wide variety of activities from reading to sports and most things in between. I am excited about being here for a time such as this - excited about what God is doing here and I look forward to joining with you all in being followers of Christ in this place.

**Jesus said, I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. John 15:16**

## VESTRY 2021



Back - Keith Buck, Ellen Scrivener, Rachel Powell, Hamish Harper, Kate Bristed, Glen Ashworth (Vicar), Conway Taylor, Stephen Sheat (Vicar's Warden) Front - Jennifer Bennett-Burrows (Peoples' Warden) Dion Mundy, Pauline Tisch, John Ealand. Inset - Konrad Cross

# *Service with a Smile!*

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR CHURCH FAMILY

### **Roger & Rosemarie Nicholls**

Roger and Rosemarie Nicholls are familiar smiling faces at our 10AM Service. Now in their mid-sixties, they are parents of two, and also have two grandchildren; none of whom live locally.

Their connection with Nativity began in 1993.

Rosemarie was feeling despondent in another church she was attending and started searching for a good spiritual home. Jean Rooney encouraged her to 'try' Nativity, and she recalls that the first evening service she attended, she was accompanied by Carol Brimble. "On Sundays, I started going to my regular church in the morning and the evening service at Nativity," she said.

"At this time, Roger and I were going through a marriage crisis, and Richard and Hilary Ellena were running a seminar for couples with troubled marriages. Roger and I went along and here we are - now in our 46th year of marriage! Our God knew where we needed to be and the support we needed to get us through this time."

Over the years, Rosemarie has been a care cell coordinator, rostered on for preparing Holy Communion, a Communion assistant, and on our Prayer Chain. She has resumed helping with Tunes for Tots, which is Nativity's thriving outreach to parents and toddlers of our community.

Roger has served as a care cell leader, setting up and assisting in service of Holy Communion. He is also a member of Vestry. (Roger's great grandparents were married by Archdeacon Butt whose picture is in the corridor between our church and lounge.)

The Nicholls own Steamcleanz, a local business, which does an excellent job of cleaning and servicing Nativity and three other churches at special rates. They also support this magazine and have purchased advertising space since its inception.



***Roger & Rosemarie pictured above in Wellington Botanic Gardens on Roger's 65th birthday. Roger comes from a family of horticulturalists. Growing orchids is his new Gold Card hobby!***

The highlight and favourite blessing from their Nativity life occurred when they joined a group sharing Rick Warren's 'A Purpose Driven Life'. That group stayed together as a new carecell, and they formed wonderful friendships with those involved. The women were very keen crafters/quilters, and spent regular weekends, with tressle, sewing machines, extension cords and all their sewing bits, set up in Clare Vallance's lounge. This certainly says something about Doug's patience and understanding! At the end of each day the men would come and we would share a meal together. They were special times and part of happy memories, cherished by each person. I asked the Nicholls what advice they would offer to young people today. Their reply was, "Form real relationships with others, not with devices." and "The best gift you can give an elderly person is your time."

And so say all of us; the geriatrics of Marlborough!  
By Rose Francis

**SteamCleanz**  
Marlborough

**Roger Nicholls**

027 578 1163

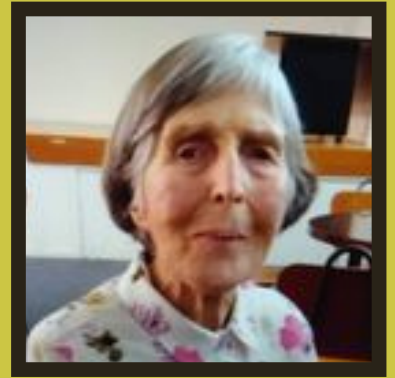
info@steamcleanz.co.nz

www.steamcleanz.co.nz



# *A Nativity Stalwart*

Betsy Frizzell is 93 and still turning up for services at Nativity most Sundays. She trained as a nurse in Christchurch in 1950, and went on to work in many places, including being a district nurse covering a vast area of the North Island. Betsy and her husband moved from Rangiora to Blenheim when he was offered a position as an engineer in 1965. They raised their four children here, and Nativity Church was the backbone of their family life. All of them attended Sunday School and Bible classes as they grew up. Betsy remembers beloved vicars of old, the old church, and reckons the 'new' hall was a big improvement. (That hall is about to undergo major renovation again, as Nativity seeks to be more community focussed and draw in outsiders.)



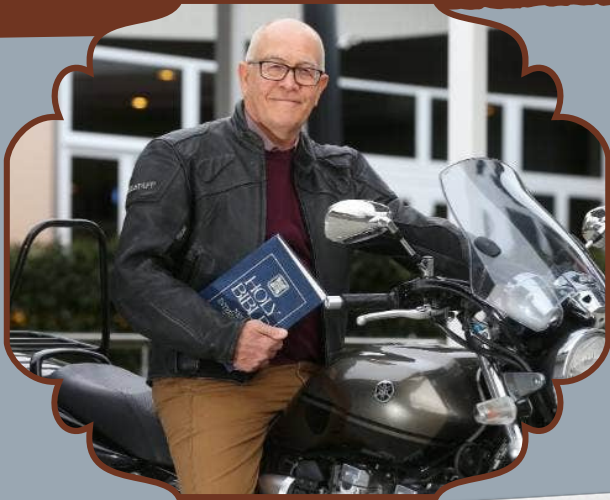
**BETSY FRIZZELL**

Nativity was the venue for many funerals, baptisms, and weddings in the Frizzells' life. The young family attended evening services where Betsy and her husband enjoyed serving as Welcomers. Sadly, Betsy lost her soul-mate in 2014.

I asked Betsy what advice she would offer to young people today. Without hesitation, she replied "Be regular in attending services in God's house and learning to walk in His Way. Keep your faith in God, you can trust Him."

Rose Francis

## *Farewell Chris!*



Chris Donaldson, Wairau Hospital Chaplain, is retiring to Christchurch. He is seen here at one of his several farewell events. This one included the commissioning of VCA's - Voluntary Chaplain Assistants.

Alison Brice and Miriam McNamara were commissioned as Rest Home Chaplains and Jean Rooney as a Chaplain Assistant at the hospital.

Chris has set up this excellent new initiative of training chaplains for the Rest homes.



Gerry Mead farewells and thanks Chris on behalf of the VCA's and Chaplaincy Committee.



Alison Brice, Jean Rooney, Miriam McNamara





# ASHWORTH FAMILY WE WELCOME YOU TO OUR PLACE IN THE SON !

Rev'd Glen Ashworth was inducted as Vicar of Nativity on 4th February 2021



Glen, his wife Sarah, their children, Lily, Finn, and Daisy, receiving gifts from members of the congregation.



Glen shares a joke with the congregation. Behind him is Bishop Steve Maina, Bishop of Nelson (centre), and Rev's Susan Howarth and Joe Keighley - Joint Regional Deans for Marlborough.



Ash Wednesday, February 17th - the first day of Lent, which is always 46 days before Easter Sunday. The sign of cross with ash symbolizes repentance. Lent is a time for a personal spiritual stock-take as we journey with Jesus towards the Cross and Resurrection. Central photo is burning of 2020 Palm Crosses.

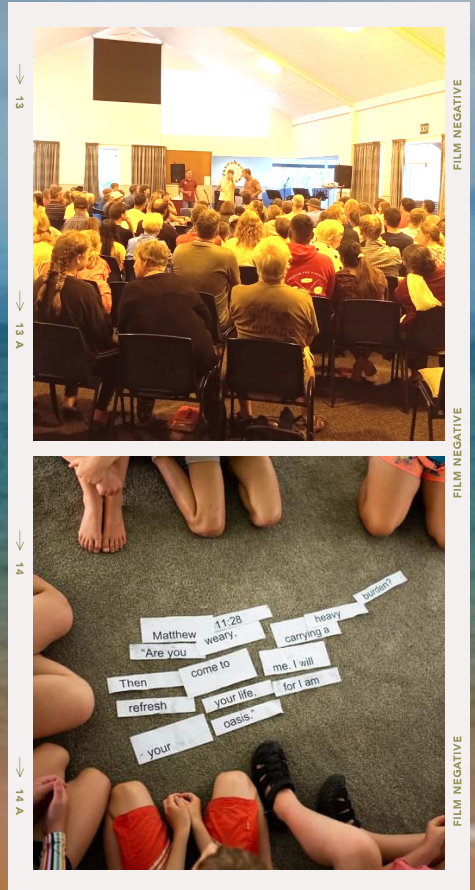
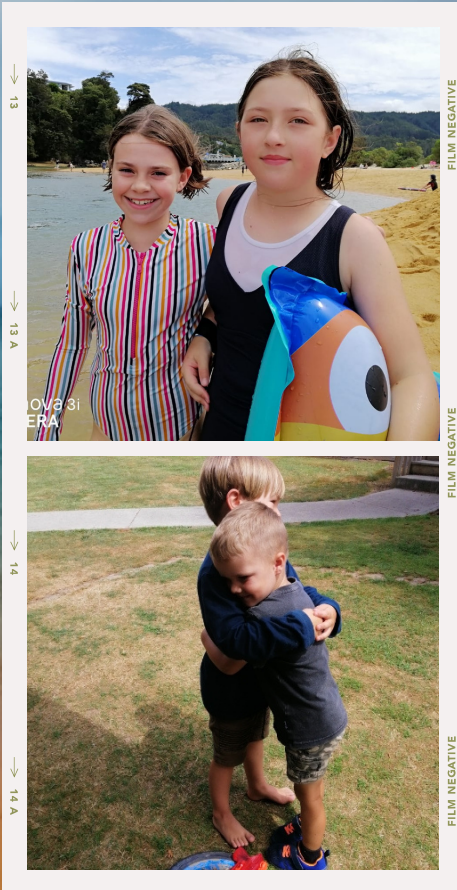


# Convergence Camp

**AN  
OPPORTUNITY  
TO BE INSPIRED!**

Convergence is the annual gathering of Nelson Diocesan Anglican Families and individuals, at Bethany Park in beautiful Kaiteriteri, Tasman.

The 2021 speakers were Wesley Smith, who ministers in Aspire Church Nelson, Bishop Steve Maina, and Alistair Simmons, an Elder in Nelson Aspire Church



I loved riding my bike around ....Aaron

I Loved making new friends....Alice

Great to be able to meet and connect with our wider Church Family

It was great learning new songs and singing with a big group.....Katherine

A place where there are other Christians of a similar age to our children and youth



**SOME OF THE NATIVITY WHANAU!**

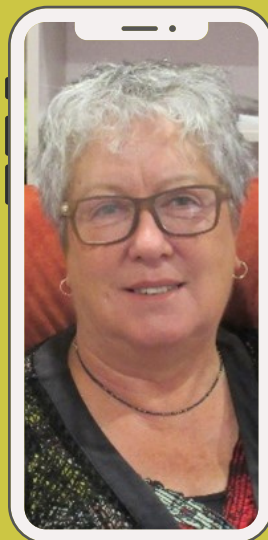


# MEET SHARON THOMAS, THE NEW PARISH NURSE



Sharon was commissioned at Nativity by the Bishop's Chaplain, Venerable David Hollingsworth.

- Nativity, St. Luke's Spring Creek and Holy Trinity Picton.
- Sharon was previously the Elder-Care worker at St. Christopher's, Redwoodtown.
- She can be contacted at [parishnurse@nativity.org.nz](mailto:parishnurse@nativity.org.nz)



**THURSDAY MORNING COMMUNION SERVICES** are always a delight, and even more so on the first Thursday of each month when Jane Sheat serves morning tea! This three-quarter hour service begins at 10.00 am and includes a short homily and two hymns. A variety of liturgies are used for Communion and once a month Ven. Kevin Thompson uses the 1662 form of the Communion service.



**NATIVITY'S 'FIRST STEPS'** for the Under Fives takes place every Sunday beginning at 10.00am





**NATIVITY KIDS** - Teacher Kathy Taylor with her 12 young 'disciples'!

## OUR 'CALENDAR GIRL' IS LEAVING!



Heather Murchison has not only been a loved and valued member of the Nativity Family but she has also been a valued member of the NATIVITY NEWS TEAM. Heather was our 'Calendar Girl', responsible for collating information and dates of forthcoming events. Of equal importance, Heather was our Proofreader! Even when we were sure we had it right, Heather was sharp enough to find a comma missing or a letter not capitalized! Heather 'thank you'. It was you who urged us to begin the Nativity News, and now this is our eighteenth edition!

Our love and prayers go with you as you begin the next chapter of your life in Christchurch. Perhaps we will see a 'Lady Isaac News' being published any time soon!

Miriam Taylor

## PIE AND PINT

A group of men meets at John Neal's house on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6.00 pm.

originally called Pizza and a Pint to reflect the preferred cuisine, a dietary change demanded a name change to Pie and a Pint. Here men gather to have a light meal together and wash it down with a preferred beverage which ranges from ale or wine down through to tea and coffee.



While a programme is usually arranged for each meeting, any agenda receives no more than cursory attention, so while we currently are discussing Philip Yancey's studies on The Bible Jesus Read, we just as easily could be talking about the Americas' Cup, the latest trends in auto engineering or whether or not the Covid Tracking system is effective. We talk, debate or argue about anything and everything as the mood takes us, the only restriction being The Chatham House Rule which states that while what is said in our group may be repeated, who said it may not be divulged.

The group is open to all men who wish basically to bat around issues of living as Christians in the 21st century with the present roll of 11 members comprising blokes from four different churches.

John Neal



# PALM SUNDAY



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IN  
THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM



PALM SUNDAY IN PAKISTAN



PALM SUNDAY IN POLAND



ON PALM SUNDAY THE CHILDREN OF THE CONGREGATION  
MAKE PALM CROSSES TO HANG AROUND THEIR NECKS.

In 2009 I visited a friend in Egypt who lived across the Nile River from the city of Luxor. One Sunday we travelled out into the desert to the St. Tawdros Coptic Monastery. Although I did not understand a word that was spoken, the crosses on the buildings outside and the pictures of Christ in the foyer reminded me I was amongst the worldwide Christian family. I touched the cross around my neck and looked at the women around me - their smiles said, 'Welcome.'

Miriam Taylor

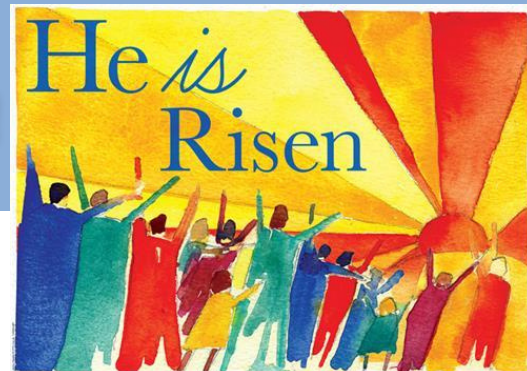


PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS IN GAZA CITY PALESTINE/ISRAEL



# CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

**Nicolai Ivanovich Bukharin was one of the most powerful men on earth. He was a Russian communist leader. He took part in the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.**



There is a story told about a journey he took. He went from Moscow to Kiev in 1930 to address a huge crowd. The subject of course was atheism. He attacked Christianity and said some very insulting words against it, and he argued against it as well. It took him a long time to convince the crowd. At the end of his talk, he was confident that he had indeed convinced them that they should reject Christ and embrace atheism.

So he turned over the meeting to the parish priest. The priest complimented him on his eloquence. Then turning to the crowd, he gave the orthodox Christian dismissal saying:

"Christ is Risen!"

And the people passionately replied as with one thundering voice:

"HE IS RISEN INDEED!"

No matter what had been said to those people, they knew in their hearts the essential Gospel message that Christ had indeed risen.



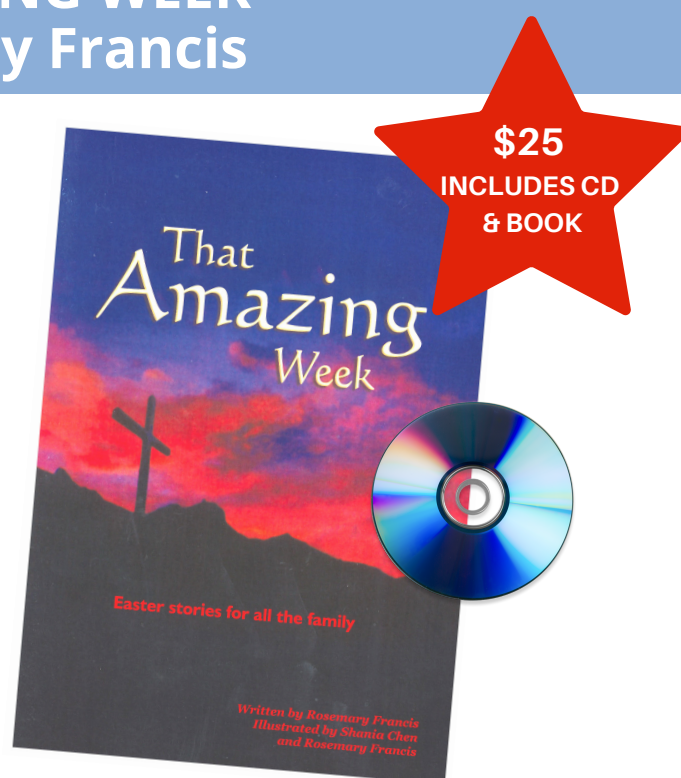
## THAT AMAZING WEEK by Rosemary Francis

Rosemary Francis (previously Chen) is a prolific author, poet and journalist with a heart for sharing her Christian faith.

Shania Chen is Rosemary's granddaughter, who has just graduated from High School, The Bible College of Wales. Shania is the main illustrator of That Amazing Week. She brings a youthful perspective to well-known and previously historic events, which she views with fresh eyes.

That Amazing Week was written for radio and recorded by Christian Recording Centre, Christchurch. It has been played over many radio stations in the days of Holy Week, leading up to Easter.

All sales of this book and CD are pledged to support the work of Church Mission Society in Uganda, where their cousins Tessa and Nick Laing are sharing God's love.





# BRING IT INTO THE LIGHT

A Story of Pain and Courage.

by Jacinda Thompson

In 2005 I was abused by Reverend Michael Van Wijk here at Nativity. It happened in the context of him approaching me to offer pastoral care. I accepted that offer as I was struggling with post traumatic stress disorder after the death of my baby son. Although I was sexually violated, it was the spiritual and psychological abuse involved that has had the most harmful and enduring effects on me. I am still under the care of a psychologist and still find it hard to talk about the details of my son's death or the abuse, one of the most difficult things has been the enduring connection between the two. It has taken me fifteen years to feel able to write this opening paragraph, it shouldn't be so hard to reveal the dark, broken parts of our lives, but it is.

After the abuse, it was five years before I could set foot in Nativity Church again. But the time came when despite my efforts to throw away my faith, I just couldn't. And that meant I had to ask myself if I really did believe in the forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing that is so central to Christianity. It was tough returning and I repeatedly did so then quit again for a few months - and for a few years, I often had to leave services part-way through. I eventually reached a point on my forgiveness journey of no longer feeling any bitterness towards the Church. But I still felt the weight of carrying a dark secret and seemed to be forever battling with distressing memories.

This is when God spoke to me. The words were not audible but more like an interruption into my train of thought. They did not come as a loud command bellowed at me from the heavens but from within, and yet I knew they were not my own. They were gentle and simple yet strong and meaningful. It surprised me that I heard them as they came at a time I was fighting against connecting with or trusting God, but His grace abounds. The phrase "Bring it into the Light" is not a particularly original one but it stood in stark contrast to every other thought I was having and in contrast to many of the messages I was getting from around me. You have to remember that this was well before the "Me too" movement erupted and such things were not openly spoken about. I have only ever heard from God with similar clarity a couple of other times and they too were life-changing words. I knew I couldn't ignore them.



*Jacinda & Aaron Thompson*

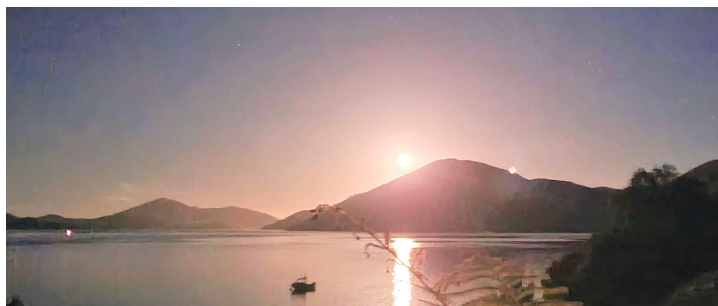
At the time of hearing these words in 2014, I was Board Chair for St Mary's Blenheim school and Father Aidan Kay was also on our Board. He confessed to an indecent assault on a young man and I watched the Catholic Church process for dealing with this unfold. It triggered things for me and I felt that my own abuse years earlier hadn't been dealt with at all professionally by this Diocese. I also felt a strong moral obligation to tell Police to keep others safe. But I felt equally strong fears, the fears that had kept me quiet for the last nine years- What if it's too painful and I can't cope? What if people blame me? What if people don't believe me? What if people see me as dirty and damaged? Australia's Royal Commission into Abuse found that it takes an average of 24 years for survivors to speak about it. The fears felt big but the instruction to 'bring it into the light' felt bigger.

Hearing from God gave me some direction but was also very daunting as there were no accompanying details. Despite a lot of prayer, I had no idea exactly what this phrase required of me. I knew I had to face the vulnerability of exposing my abuse, but who should I tell? How? Why? In hindsight it was just as well I had no idea of how hard it would be, bringing things into the light has taken years and the work is ongoing. There have been many times when I have come up against brick walls and I have felt distressed as to why God would ask this of me. I think this came from a misunderstanding that if God directs something, he will open doors and make an easy path.



I've come to believe He often asks us to take the challenging path, but one that leads to ultimate good: sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same. It is only now I can see that the picture is so much bigger than me. It wasn't just about me bringing my abuse into the light, but also about me seeing things I hadn't before - revealing to me the extent of abuse in New Zealand and the barriers to justice and healing and about finding ways of bringing God's light into all of that darkness.

I earnestly began the process by contacting the Police in 2014. I naively thought that all I had to do was tell the truth and that justice would prevail. I also felt confident as I had documents from 2005 to prove that I had told my husband, the Church and my GP at that time.



I also had email evidence of my abuser's manipulation and my asking to end the counselling sessions. However, the Police took a long time to do very little and were not interested in my evidence, stating that a defence lawyer could always create doubt without indisputable proof. Although Reverend Van Wijk admitted offering me pastoral care and making sexual contact with me, I would have to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that I didn't consent. Police explained that what I needed was multiple victims or video footage or a confession or an eye witness. As the events were historical and happened in the privacy of counselling/pastoral care sessions there was too much risk that a charge would not result in a conviction. I learned that many other countries have criminal laws that state true consent is impossible between clergy or psychologists and someone they are counselling at the time as part of their profession, but New Zealand has no such law. I was devastated that I had been through this re-traumatising year-long Police investigation for nothing, but I learned that I am not the only one - in New Zealand, only about 10 out of 100 sexual violence crimes are reported and 3 of those get to court and only one of those gets a conviction. In other words, if you report to Police, the chances that it will go nowhere are about 90%.

I continued with my efforts to bring what had happened into the light. At the time the abuse happened, I had told Church leaders in this Diocese but it wasn't dealt with well. The Bishops have since apologised to me for this (a copy is on the Nativity website). Although Reverend Van Wijk had long since resigned from Nativity, I knew that by keeping things in the dark others could be unsafe and there would be no learning for the Church - abuse cannot be prevented if no-one knows it is occurring, let alone how it happens. I made the decision to do two things - to ask the Church to reconsider my 2005 complaint and secondly, I put a complaint into the Human Rights Commission about what Van Wijk had done. The latter was a back-up of sorts as I was wary of the Church. The Human Rights Commission work to uphold the Human Rights Act which protects people from being harassed for sex when accessing goods and services in New Zealand.

This time the Diocese was willing to use the Church's Tribunal process for maintaining standards. It involved presenting my complaint to a panel, chaired by an experienced barrister. The panel was willing to assess all my evidence, question people, and examine the issue of consent. They came to the decision that there was not consent and found the abuse despicable and this resulted in Reverend Van Wijk being permanently deposed of his priest title. There were many positives about the process but also many problems. It took around two years and I needed to pay a lawyer to assist me. Although Van Wijk accepted the findings, he appealed publication. The appeal was heard in Auckland with a panel heavily weighted with bishops and priests. The biggest disappointment was that it resulted in most of the Title D findings being filed away never to see the light of day. I have a background in education and my expectation was for something like the Teacher's Council do for misconduct - they openly publish full findings on their website, with names anonymised where necessary. Instead, the 40-page Title D determination was summarised in a couple of short sentences which were vague and misleading due to the limitations of the wording in the Canons. I suppose I was expected to be satisfied that Van Wijk had been named and deposed but God hadn't told me to name and shame and punish but to bring it into the light and I felt such frustration and disappointment that this hadn't happened.



I went back to the drawing board. The courts of New Zealand put a high value on open justice and I came to the realisation that they would be a better option if I was to bring things into the light. I contacted Cooper Legal - a law firm that specialises in historical abuse cases but I needed a very low income to get legal aid. I realised that I wouldn't qualify and that the financial cost would be too high. I learned that Cooper Legal has thousands of files of people abused in the care of faith-based institutions and in State care. The vast majority of their files have not seen the light. At this time the Human Rights Commission came back to me too, stating that too much time had elapsed since my abuse for them to address it and informed me that I could try contacting the Human Rights Review Tribunal (HRRT). I wrote my whole sorry story to the HRRT but held out little hope - why on earth had God asked me to do this if it was impossible?

It was at this time that I had a significant break through. The HRRT rang to say that not only would they take my case but that it would be fully funded, ie they would pay all the legal costs. They pick just a few cases to fund in this way each year, choosing cases that show clear injustice and have the potential to benefit wider New Zealand as opposed to just the complainant. This tribunal is different to something like a criminal court where the focus is on punishing the offender. Instead the focus is on the victim and on future prevention - the HRRT work to establish what happened to the victim, who was responsible for the service being provided at the time, what would be a fair financial figure for compensation and if more training for the organisation responsible needs to be ordered. This meant I needed to add the Church as defendants. This was hard for me but I believed that ultimately it would be good for the Church.

But it certainly wasn't plain sailing from here - the HRRT is under-resourced and there was to be a long wait to get an actual hearing. It took four years to get my case against Van Wijk heard in 2020 and the outcome is yet to be decided and written up (this part often takes a further two years). It is a long time to be stuck in the justice system: it was difficult to make future plans not knowing when my hearing date would be. I had to put the mental health treatment recommended to help me on hold as it can alter memories which I needed to be accurate. A lot went on over those years, there were times when it was very busy gathering evidence and witness statements and other times when there were frustrating delays and I had to be patient. It was hard going through constant cycles of needing all the details at the forefront of my mind and then trying to put them away again.

Throughout this time I remained open to mediating with the Church, although the reaction of this Diocese to my legal action was hurtful. It was initially not one of accepting responsibility and making amends but rather they chose to vigorously defend the charges with lawyers. I could not believe that they were claiming no responsibility because God employed Reverend Van Wijk and not them and that they wanted it thrown out due to the Statute of Limitations (ie, it happened too long ago). I had to share very private information, including personal emails, my medical and counselling records with all the lawyers involved - so that I could prove that I was too mentally unwell to have filed my case in the years straight after the abuse. The Church also paid their own psychiatrist to try and discredit the report my psychiatrist gave and claimed that due to their Trust set up that they were not a legal entity so therefore couldn't be held responsible.

***"The church belongs to God and  
I wasn't responsible for the actions of  
every member in it"***

I felt angry and at times it was difficult to not let bitterness towards the Church creep back in. There was a small number here at Nativity who knew about my battle and were very supportive of me and there are many here who have kind, compassionate hearts despite not even knowing what others are going through. I came to the realisation that the Church belongs to God and I wasn't responsible for the actions of every member in it. The Church will always consist of people trying to follow God and getting it wrong and trying again, including of course myself. It was enough for me to try and keep myself doing God's will as I still struggled to bring things fully into the light. I was trying to be obedient to God, but I still had a fair few of my own terms thrown in... one being that my name would be suppressed, a decision driven by fear and shame rather than God.

The Diocese had a change of heart eventually and wanted to settle and reconcile rather than head to the Tribunal hearing. The skeptic in me wondered if that was because the New Zealand Herald had condemned their approach or because they knew they wouldn't win but I chose to think the best. The Bishops met me face to face and gave me a sincere and heartfelt apology and I will never forget that. I was asked for my forgiveness and I gave it, I had given it in my heart long ago. Settlements are often hidden deals done behind closed doors - to bring things into the light it had to be in a way that didn't hide things but



instead exposed the mistakes of the past in order to bring about positive change. I was able to insist on a detailed published apology stating what was done wrong and a list of changes to the safety practices in the Diocese to be implemented. I also insisted that the settlement amount be made public to stop other victims from being in the dark about what is paid and to act as an incentive for all churches and faiths to take these issues seriously in the future. As part of the settlement, I dropped the case against the Bishops, but I still felt that Van Wijk should be accountable personally and that what he did should be on the public record - so I continued with the HRRT hearing against him.

I thought that things were coming to an end but during it all, the New Zealand government announced that they were doing a Royal Commission into Abuse in Care (set up in 2018) and that they made the decision to include faith-based institutions. I was invited in December last year to give evidence to the Royal Commission on the issue of redress as someone who had a unique insight into the barriers that abuse survivors face and who could explain the pros and cons of the various possible justice avenues. To be able to speak openly I had to get my name suppression order reversed which was scary but in keeping with bringing everything into the light. It was a poignant moment when I was thanked by the Royal Commission at the end of my statement for my "illuminating" evidence. I have also had the opportunity to have input into changes the Anglican Church is making to their complaints procedure and to highlight what improvements are needed. I have become involved with a New Zealand network for Survivors of Abuse in Faith-based institutions- a group who support survivors and work for justice, accountability and improvements in safety practices. Sadly, there are hundreds of survivors of abuse in churches but I have had the privilege of hearing others' experiences and helping them bring them into the light. I have also become much more aware of New Zealand's abuse problem, particularly abuse

perpetrated by those who were/are in positions of trust. What happened to me pales in comparison to many whose entire childhoods were taken by this. I feel an expectation to wrap up by saying this is a story of forgiveness, healing, and transformation - and it is - but not in a caterpillar to beautiful butterfly kind of way. I am not a better version and there are parts of me that are still broken from all of this. I don't believe that I will flutter off into the sunset never to have troubles again - we do not live in heaven, we live in hope. I also don't believe God plans or allows bad things to happen for our own development. But I do know that where there is darkness He will bring light.

***".....But I do know that where there is darkness  
He will bring light...."***

As I write this looking over the deck in the Marlborough Sounds, I relate more to a tree I see growing before me than a butterfly. Some of its branches have broken off, some have died but are yet to fall, some have flourished, some protect little seedlings beneath, some grow on weird angles, some have been battered by the sea winds or been hammered by possums and struggle just to survive, a bellbird delights in one. It is God's wonderful creation and it stands - it has strong roots and knows to always face the light. It is me and I suspect it is also you.



If you've experienced sexual harm and need a safe place to explore 'where to from here?'

<http://www.safetotalk.nz>

If you've experienced any kind of abuse in either a faith-based or state-based institution OR you wish to increase your own awareness of the work of the Royal Commission: <http://www.abuseincare.org.nz>

If you've experienced abuse in the Anglican Church: <https://www.anglican.org.nz/Complaints>

To network with other survivors and/or support them: [Survivors of Church Abuse NZ](#) on Facebook  
(or email: [liztonks@gmail.com](mailto:liztonks@gmail.com))



# Thank you!

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# Easter

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### Maundy Thursday Service

7.00pm - Nativity

### Good Friday

Blenheim Combined  
Churches

ASB Theatre - 10.00am

**Easter Sunday  
Celebration Services**  
at Nativity - 8.00am and  
10.00am



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