

Opoho Signal

April 2020

via email

Opoho Signal

Newsletter of the Opoho Presbyterian Church

50 Signal Hill Road, Opoho, Dunedin 9010

website: www.opohochurch.org



April 2020

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Editorial: Symbols

Symbols of various sorts have been used in and by Christian churches for many hundreds of years. The cross is nowadays the most widely used and recognised, although it was not at first the most commonly used. A fish was an early symbol of Christ, and a peacock was a symbol of resurrection. The four Evangelists are often represented by a man (Matthew), a lion (Mark), an ox (Luke), and an eagle (John), derived from the Books of Ezekiel (chapter 1) and Revelation (chapter 4). Many other saints have been given symbols – think of St Andrew’s cross, St Peter’s keys, and St Catherine’s wheel.

A symbol is a sort of pictorial shorthand or visual abbreviation, a reminder of someone or something more important. In a Christian context, no symbol should in itself be treated as sacred – that quickly

In this issue	Page
Editorial	2
Parish Council and Church News	4
Prayer in a time of anxiety	6
Lessons from the Past.....	9
What to do when there’s no church.....	9
Interfaith Matters.....	11
Food Bank and Night Shelter.....	12
Keeping in Touch.....	13
Bible Book of the Month.....	14
Operation Cover Up.....	14
Roster and Coming Up @ Opoho Presbyterian Church.....	15
<i>Opoho Signal</i> contact details	15
And in conclusion... ..	15
Lectionary, 19 April - 3 May 2020	15
Lectionary, 5 - 12 April 2020	16
Plan B Wedding Day, Helen Bevin & Kevin Lee.....	separate insert

leads to superstition or idolatry – and in the Protestant Reformed tradition it is not customary to make extensive use of symbols in churches: even a basic cross would have been highly unusual in a Presbyterian church in New Zealand until a couple of generations ago. And in mathematics, symbols are used as a way of organising and systematising ideas: they can be manipulated and rearranged to provide a path of discovery and problem-solving.

At Opoho we have a few symbols in front of us in the church. In the main window we have the Presbyterian symbol of the burning bush of Moses, the palm branches of triumph and peace, and the crown of eternal life. On the front of the communion table we have the letters IHS – originally a contraction of the Greek (Jesus) but later treated as an abbreviation of the Latin Iesus Hominum Salvator (Jesus, Saviour of Men) – combined with a cross. And of course we are used to gathering around the table to share a symbolic memorial meal – communion.

Two other symbols of Christ have appeared on orders of service at Opoho from time to time. The first is a pelican ‘in its piety’ (see front cover) sacrificially feeding her young with her blood (physically impossible, but people had some odd biological ideas in ancient times). It is interesting that it is a female symbol of Christ. The second is the Paschal (Passover or Easter) Lamb (below), another



symbol of sacrifice, carrying a white flag with a red cross, a symbol of the Resurrection. The two drawings are by Auckland heraldic artist Roger Barnes.

As we approach Easter, I invite you to consider those two symbols and what they represent. Are the pelican and lamb just picturesque medieval ornaments, relics of a past age? But looking beyond the symbols, what does the sacrifice and death and resurrection of Jesus mean for us individually and as a community? I cannot give a simple and slick answer that will satisfy everyone, but you can consider the concepts behind the symbols and perhaps find something helpful and enriching.

Above all, as we face the uncertainties of a pandemic and economic disruption, I suggest that we need to focus on the hope that the resurrection offers, based on a love stronger even than death.

Gregor Macaulay



Parish Council and Church News

Opoho Church News

Our Sunday morning service on 22 March was our last service until further notice due to the COVID-19 crisis. All face-to-face services and events at Opoho Church are now cancelled for at least the next four weeks, and probably longer, with the national lockdown. We are looking at ways we can negotiate this next month and the many months after this as a worshipping community. We look forward to developing new ways to “meet”, support each other, and sustain ourselves. We are encouraging parish visitors to keep more in touch with their people than usual, and this is especially the case for those who are not on email.

In the meantime, we will endeavour to email every week or so that

we keep in touch. If you have not been getting updates by email from me (and before that Margaret), and wish to do so, please email me at mark.bevin@gmail.com

You may be interested in a private Facebook group under the name *Opoho Church Community*. It is a safe place for people of the Opoho Presbyterian Church community to keep in touch and look out for each other, providing spiritual and practical support, and continuing to share our faith even when we can no longer hold services. Members’ names and what they write here can be seen only by other members.

You may recall that, at the time of Margaret’s farewell, Philip and Jenny collected photos of parishioners and these have since been made into a lovely photobook. Philip, Jenny and I presented a copy to Margaret last week and she was thrilled to receive it. Thank you, Jenny and Philip, for your hard work on this. The church has a copy and it is waiting in the Morrison Lounge for you to view when this COVID-19 crisis is over. It is a treat to look forward to.

Thank you to Fiona and Henrik for their generous hospitality for our church picnic on Saturday 14 March at their holiday home in Tumai. We had a wonderful day, with 27 adults and 6 children, a great shared lunch and barbecue, coffees, kites, kayaks, walks, watching sea lions and murmurations of terns and gulls.

The Otago Community Hospice has sent us a letter of thanks for the \$84 donation we sent them from the collection at the Community Advent Service.

Some of our copies of *Alleluia Aotearoa*, *Faith Forever Singing*, and *Hope is Our Song* are missing from church. If you have taken one home to look at, could you please remember to bring it back once it is safe to do so.

We were fortunate to receive five free Bibles (Contemporary English Version) from Cheryl Harray, the Kids Friendly Coach. They are the same Bibles as those used for Religious Education in schools for year 5 and 6 pupils and have been scattered in the pews and Morrison Lounge.

Thank you to the 10 brave souls who turned up for the working bee despite the challenging rain, wind and cold. They made much

progress in getting the grounds ready for winter, but there are still some gardening jobs needing doing when we are able.

Opoho People News

Helen Bevin was married to Kevin Lee at Opoho Church on the afternoon of Sunday 22 March with their immediate families in attendance. It was a joyous occasion and the Beyer family led the small congregation in the singing of *The Plan B Wedding Day*, which they had written especially for the occasion. The words appear later in this Signal. They were to have been married on 18 April, but brought the event forward to ensure that it happened. We wish them every blessing in their life together.

Chris Young's daughter, Briana, was to have been married to Tom Whitham towards the end of April and that will now not be able to go ahead. We hope it isn't too long before they can begin to plan for this important event again.

Wider Church News

The AGM of the Synod of Otago and Southland was set down to be held in Gore over the weekend of 17 and 18 April, with Andrew Smith as our representative. We are still waiting to hear about a change of date or a switch to an e-meeting.

The meeting of the Southern Presbytery that was to have been held the first weekend in May has now become an e-meeting.

We cannot 'meet together', but we can 'encourage one another, and all the more as we see the (lockdown) approaching...', Hebrews 10:25 (edited).

Tui Bevin (with assistance from Andrew Smith)



Prayer in a time of anxiety

Like many of us, I was taught to pray by my mother – simple prayers, and later a litany of intercession for a quite large group of relatives – all of them, except my sister, now departed.

Looking back now, I realise that none of that was 'about me', about what I wanted or thought I needed...

Somehow, growing up, church left me with the impression that prayer was about asking, but at school I faced a question. Could I ask for success? – I did a bit of distance running at high school. But I came to realise that I was never going to be anywhere near the best, and that it would be wrong to ask for that – the best one on the day deserved to win.

The same issue arose about exams. I was always anxious, and prone to losing focus. By now I was beginning to see some kind of 'context'. Prayer needed to fit the context – it was not a magic way of manipulating it. I could ask for calm, and clear recollection of what I had studied, but the result was up to me.

As a university student I discovered Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French priest-scientist who made a big effort to understand evolution in Christian (and somewhat mystical) terms. His *Phenomenon of Man* was much discussed at that time, but for prayer his *Le Milieu Divin* (the translator was stuck for an English equivalent) was more helpful. This 'Living in the context of God' made sense for me, alongside Paul's assertion, 'in him we live, and move, and have our being'.

Now, in this time of shared anxiety about what lies ahead, we are being called to think and act with those around us in mind. That is, to show solidarity – instead of entitlement. To live with the realisation that we are all in this together. To do first of all what is required, not what best suits us.

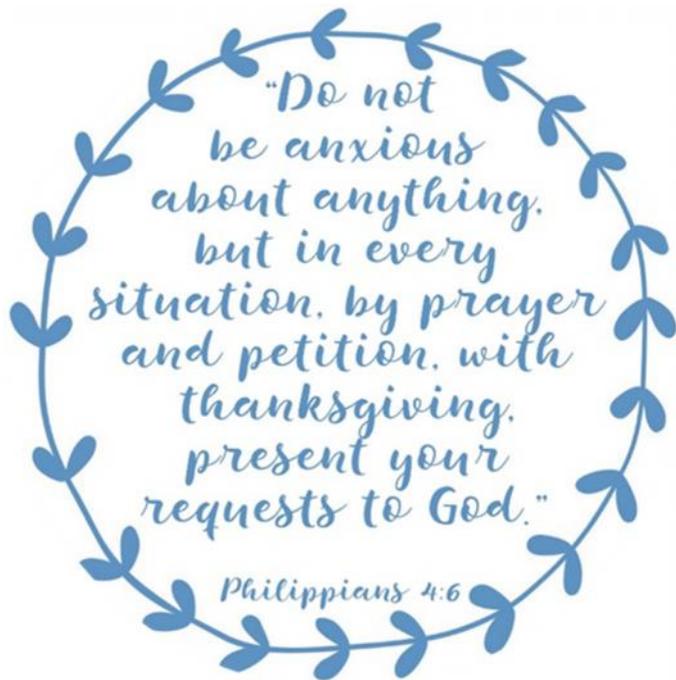
In a real sense, prayer and solidarity are the inside and the outside of the same thing. If we do what we can, within the restrictions in place, to express kindness, to keep in contact by phone or other means, to help people to know we are mindful of their situations, then our prayer will focus also on the reality of God, and of the assurance that we are not alone now, or at any time.

And what about prayer itself? Jesus spoke of a parent-child relationship. Many of us have learned how to listen to the concerns of our children, and recall sharing our own anxieties, even as adults. When I asked a group of village people in North Sumatra how they understood prayer I got a response I have never forgotten: 'to present everything for God to look at'; but the man used a word for 'present' that is used in only one context – to present oneself or some

situation, humbly and with a deep sense of awe and respect, for the Sultan to consider. Traditionally the sultans did not respond in any way. The petitioner had to leave his or her concern in trust...

One of the first names for the early followers of Jesus was people of 'The Way' – so prayer is part of our 'Living in the Way of God'. And so is our solidarity with everyone around us. Prayer is how we can share our anxious concerns about what is ahead, and solidarity is our acting in the knowledge that 'living in the Way of God' gives shape and warmth to what we try to do together and for each other. We *are* all in this strange new reality together, but we *are not* alone. Prayer and solidarity are the shape of our response.

Simon Rae



Lessons from the Past

I had the task of telling all the people that we had recruited to take services over the next few months that we are suspending our normal activities. In response, Peter Wishart referred me to Jeremiah chapter 32 (which gives a fascinating glimpse of how land was bought and sold in ancient Israel) and said, "I too look forward to when we can worship together again. I have been thinking of Jeremiah who bought a field when the Babylonians were about to overrun Judah. He showed his faith that normal life would be resumed in God's good time. He never set foot on the land. It was an inspiring example of faith in God. The virus emergency will send us into a kind of exile from the life we have known. In order to get through the emergency we need faith in God."

Gregor Macaulay



What to do when there's no church

Our pattern of Sunday church attendance is being disrupted for an indeterminate time, but you needn't abandon all spiritual practices. The lectionary readings detailed elsewhere in this newsletter are a systematic selection of Bible passages that you can read for yourself. Even if you haven't been involved with the Bible Book of the Month discussions, you can read your own way through the successive books of the Bible. Missing the music at church? Try turning on *Praise Be* on TV1 each Sunday morning at (or soon after) 8 a.m. (or 9 a.m. on TV1+1) for a selection of hymns sung by New Zealand congregations and choirs, presented by Philip Somerville's cousin, Chris Nichol (son of Frank and Beth Nichol). And on radio, RNZ Concert has *Hymns on Sunday* at 7.30 a.m. each Sunday. If you have internet access, you can search for sermons, Bible commentaries, and Christian music, ranging from mediaeval chants to oratorios, familiar hymns, and modern worship songs.

Ed Masters, our Interim Moderator, will be recording weekly podcasts and devotions. These are available on the First Church website at www.firstchurchotago.org

Southern Presbytery has sent out a list of other radio and online services. This list will no doubt be added to over the coming weeks and Tui will pass any additions on in future emails.

Radio Church Sundays @ 8 a.m. on Otago Access Radio 105.4FM
An ecumenical service brought to you by Dunedin’s inner-city ministers. Clergy from the Anglican, Christian Churches (Church of Christ), Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches present each half-hour programme.

St James Palmerston www.stjamespalmerston.org.nz
Upper Clutha www.wpccc.org.nz/sermons-messages/ plus video found via www.wpccc.org.nz

Calvin Church, Gore – livestream link will be on the Calvin home page at www.calvin.org.nz

East Taieri Church is aiming to live stream sermons on Sunday at 10 a.m. on Facebook and Youtube (if for some reason the live streaming does not happen, a video of the sermon will be uploaded instead). The links are below:

www.facebook.com/EastTaieri/
www.youtube.com/channel/UCW3hCHTO8iE_hbMpl_NrAuA

Or audio will be available next week on:
www.etchurch.co.nz/news/listen-to-a-sermon

Please pray for all adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis and the lockdown, and remember that if you have any concerns, suggestions or good news stories to share, please get in touch with Tui Bevin or your parish visitor.

2 Corinthians 1: 3-4: What a wonderful God we have – he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us.



Interfaith Matters

I was looking forward to arriving back in Dunedin and to being involved in Race Relations Week; along with many other things, as I write this, it has been cancelled. Pre the COVID-19 restrictions, however, fortunately some special things to do with Interfaith, and also Multi-ethnic groups, were able to happen here in Dunedin.

An Interfaith Hui run in conjunction with the Ethnic Communities government agency showed the range of initiatives already under way in Dunedin. The Dunedin Celebration of Harmony 2020 UN Interfaith Dinner accentuated the special feeling and acceptance between the different groups over a shared dinner.

There was one occasion that I very much regretted not being able to attend, because I was away. Each year we work at one of the faith traditions’ places and help out in whatever way they would like us to. This year we were invited to help on a Buddhist property on the side of Harbour Cone, clearing and cleaning the area around the Portobello Peace Stupa before the visit of a special lama. The number able to go was very small unfortunately but our lovely secretary who is of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints Church said this: “They were very gracious hosts and taught us some Buddhist teachings as we worked, so we felt very enlightened and uplifted by the experience. A very thought provoking, spiritual and introspective experience”.

While in Wellington, on 15 March I attended Kilbirnie Mosque (not knowing the event had been cancelled). The people and the experience there reflected the description of the Buddhist time above. We have some wonderful people in this world; may we all get through this difficult time at present together.

Bronwen Strang



Food Bank and Night Shelter

Each week, many members of the congregation have brought to church gifts of food for the Presbyterian Support Food Bank or money for the Dunedin Night Shelter. If you wish to continue supporting these causes while our Sunday services are suspended, you can do so as follows:



Food Bank

It's not clear how we can give physical donations to the Food Bank during the lockdown, but it is easy to make monetary donations online using the following details:

Account Name: Presbyterian Support Otago

Account Number: 06 0901 0005597 00.

Particulars: Your Last Name and Initials

Code: FBDONATION

Reference: Opoho Church

Most supermarkets have donation bins at their exits for donations to various food banks in the city.



Night Shelter

the following is copied from the website of the Dunedin Night Shelter Trust.

You can make a one-off donation to the operation of the shelter via bank transfer, cheque – please see details below.

Visit the Friends of the Night Shelter page

www.dunedinshelter.co.nz/friends-of-the-night-shelter to find out how you can support the shelter on an ongoing basis through a regular donation. Any contribution you can make is very much appreciated.

Dunedin Night Shelter bank account details:

Westpac, Moray Place

For operational funding: 03 0905 0279202 00

Please send us a short email with your deposit details and please include your name, address and phone number

info@dunedinshelter.co.nz

or cheques can be sent to:

Dunedin Night Shelter Trust, PO Box 5906, Dunedin 9054.

Please be sure to include your name, address and phone number.

or use your credit card on our givealittle page:

www.givealittle.co.nz/org/dnshelter

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*Keeping in Touch*

*Do you know...*

Opoho Church has a website, [www.opohochurch.org](http://www.opohochurch.org)

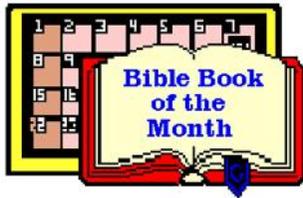
On the website you will find (among other things) links to recent sermons, downloadable copies of the Orders of Service for the two most recent Sundays, downloadable versions of the newsletter, and an on-line version of the Church Calendar.

The church also has a Facebook page (you don't need to belong to Facebook to see the page) [www.facebook.com/OpohoChurch](http://www.facebook.com/OpohoChurch)

Copies of the Parish Directory, with contact details of parishioners, are available on the back pew in the church.

This newsletter is emailed to all who have requested to receive it this way. If you are not already on the email list, and would like to be, please send an email to Andrea [andrea.johnston@columba.co.nz](mailto:andrea.johnston@columba.co.nz)

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The April Bible discussion was to have been on the *Epistle to the Philippians*. There will not be a physical gathering, but the possibility of an online meeting is being considered. Contact Tui Bevin for more information.

Tui Bevin



Operation Cover Up

In these days of social isolation, maybe some of you will have more time to knit squares for Operation Cover Up? I have only two blankets made so far this year and would like to get to at least five...

Cast on 40 stitches in double knitting, knit 40 rows (or 20cm) in garter stitch and cast off. For other wool weights adjust to make 20 x 20cm squares.

While we have no church services, please collect wool and drop squares off at my place or get in touch and I can deliver and/or collect: weavermariane@gmail.com 027 473 6026

Marian Weaver



The Roster and Coming Up @ Opoho Presbyterian Church

With no services or other meetings or group activities in the next few weeks our duty roster and diary of coming events are also suspended.



Opinions expressed in the *Opoho Signal* are those of individual authors, unless stated otherwise.

Deadline for next Opoho Signal - Monday 20 April

Please send all material for the *Opoho Signal* to:

Gregor Macaulay, 88 Forfar Street, Mornington, Dunedin 9011

Email gregor.macaulay@outlook.com



And in conclusion...

Overheard at the picnic, while a number of us were sitting inside, chatting – as you do! The door opened, and in came two more people.

But “I don’t want to come inside, it’s too noisy in here!” said James (aged 3 3/4).



Lectionary readings, 19 April - 3 May 2020			
in Year A, the Year of Matthew			
Sunday 19 April - 2nd Sunday of Easter			
Acts 2: 14a, 22-32	Ps 16	1 Peter 1: 3-9	Jn 20: 19-31
Sunday 26 April - 3rd Sunday of Easter			
Acts 2: 14a, 36-41	Ps 116: 1-4, 12-19	1 Peter 1: 17-23	Lk 24: 13-35
Sunday 3 May - 4th Sunday of Easter			
Acts 2: 42-47	Ps 23	1 Peter 2: 19-25	Jn 10: 1-10

Lectionary readings, 5 April - 12 April 2020 in Year A, the Year of Matthew			
Sunday 5 April - Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday			
None or Is 50: 4-9a	Ps 118: 1-2, 19- 29 or Ps 31: 9-16	None or Phil 2: 5-11	<i>Palm</i> Mr 21: 1-11 <i>Passion</i> Mt 26: 14-27:66 or Mt 27: 11-54
Monday 6 April			
Is 42: 1-9	Ps 36: 5-11	Heb 9: 11-15	Jn 12: 1-11
Tuesday 7 April			
Is 49: 1-7	Ps 71: 1-14	1 Cor 1: 18-31	Jn 12: 20-36
Wednesday 8 April			
Is 50: 4-9a	Ps 70	Heb 12: 1-3	Jn 13: 21-32
Thursday 9 April - Maundy Thursday			
Ex 12: 1-4, (5-10), 11-14	Ps 116: 1-2, 12-19	1 Cor 11: 23- 26	Jn 13: 1-17, 31b-35
Friday 10 April - Good Friday			
Is 52: 13-53:12	Ps 22	Heb 10: 16- 25 or Heb 4: 14-16; 5:7-9	Jn 18: 1-19:42
Saturday 11 April - Holy Saturday			
Job 14: 1-14 or Lam 3: 1-9, 19-24	Ps 31: 1-4, 15-16	1 Peter 4: 1-8	Mt 27: 57-66 or Jn 19: 38-42
Sunday 12 April - Easter Dawn Sunday			
Ex 14: 10-31; 15:20-21	Ps 114	Rom 6: 3-11	Mt 28: 1-10
Sunday 12 April - Easter Day			
Acts 10: 34-43 or Jer 31: 1-6	Ps 118: 1-2, 14-24	Col 3: 1-4 or Acts 10: 34 -43	Jn 20: 1-18 or Mt 28: 1-10

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