



Knox News

Minister's letter

Last week I sat with three people who described how they first connected with Knox Church.

One told of how she had been drawn into Knox as a University student more than 50 years ago and was baptised. She had moved away, raised a family, had a fascinating career, served a church well-known for its inclusive and creative life, and returned to Dunedin.

Another told of how, some decades ago, he had been brought to an evening service at a difficult time in his life and experienced a life-changing encounter that set him on a new direction.

He has been active in serving the community and the church for many years since. And another spoke of how in recent times he had found at Knox a thoughtful, engaging and welcoming community in which his faith has grown. They listened to each other's stories and were surprised at the similarities across the decades.

I am continually amazed at how an encounter with Christ sets people on a path of life-giving service.

A young woman who was part of a youth group I started as a young minister had coffee with me recently. More than 30 years ago she was confirmed in the faith in our congregation. She is now training to be a minister of word and sacrament. Others have gone to live out their faith in other walks of life.

I am convinced that there are few more vital groups in our society than healthy Christian communities.

Marilynne Robinson is a wonderful American writer and theologian. In her book *Givenness*, she says this about preaching but it could be said about other dimensions of being a local church: "Preaching... the extraordinary moment when someone attempts to speak in good faith, about something that matters, to people who attempt to listen in good faith.

The circumstance is moving in itself, since we poor mortals are so far enmeshed in our frauds and shenanigans, not to mention our self-deceptions, that a serious attempt at meaning, spoken and heard, is quite exceptional. It has a very special character.



"My church is across the street from a university, where good souls teach with all sincerity — the factually true, insofar as this can really be known; the history of nations, insofar as this can be faithfully reported; the qualities of an art, insofar as they can be put into words. But to speak in one's own person and voice to others who listen from the thick of their endlessly various situations, about what truly are or ought to be matters of life and death, this is a singular thing. For this we come to church."

Robinson describes something of what we cherish at Knox and what we seek to offer to our city and wider community.

This year in its 150th anniversary year, we remember our neighbour, the University of Otago. Knox people were among those who established the University. We celebrate the thousands of people who, since then, have sought to live their faith as they studied, worked and contributed there. In this edition, you will find a personal story from one of those people, the eminent scientist and Knox member Professor George Petersen (*Page 5*). It is thrilling, and challenging, to be part of a congregation that seeks to live out such neighbourliness.

Thank you for being part of it.

— Kerry



Welcoming students back to Knox: Page 3

Council Report

If I had to promote a focus for 2019, I would choose *“Plan Less and Achieve More”*. That was a suggestion made to Council by Bishop Kelvin Wright, *right*, at our annual retreat in January as we were reviewing the progress on our 2018 Annual Plan.

As you might gather, we didn't achieve all we planned. The other important message was perhaps not to plan everything. Some things will happen or evolve without any planning required. We all need to be open to letting that happen, being flexible. Opportunities will arise and we need to be able to take advantage of them

as they may open new doors, or bring new people amid us. We need to be ready to say YES.

The Council Retreat was held on 26 January, again at the Portobello Church. We had some thoughtful discussion and opportunities to reflect. It was a privilege to have Bishop Kelvin lead us. It is always extremely helpful to have someone in our midst who can view situations from a distance or with fresh eyes. Kelvin was able to say “Why don't you, why haven't you, have you tried...”

He would then state the obvious, leaving us wondering why we'd never thought of it!

As a result, we have prepared what we hope will be an achievable annual plan for 2019, with room for the unplanned and the unexpected.

There was one very strong and determined commitment made, and that was to address the financial situation. While acknowledging the careful and considered work Deacons Court does in managing the finances, Council must take responsibility for the growing gap between Knox's



income and expenditure. However, Council and Deacons Court cannot do this alone — everyone needs to do it. You will be aware of the efforts of a few who are working on fundraising projects. These projects can involve as many of you who wish to be involved. Some of you may have ideas. Working together on projects can create a wonderful sense of unity. Sadly, fundraising projects alone will not totally resolve the problem and Council needs to address that challenge.

On a brighter note, it is encouraging that a number of activities are happening and/or being planned to ensure we start the year positively. We will be welcoming new people during February and March, we have two book launches and an opportunity to share lunch together afterwards; a spiritual retreat, seminars, and hosting activities for the wider community will also take place. We will try new approaches to some regular activities; we will continue to incorporate our more “traditional” activities. We will continue to grow, learn to accept the new, and to hold our “usual” ways of doing things dear.

This year is sure to be full of new mixed with old, challenges, successes and the not so successful. There will be joy mixed with sadness and frustration. Amid whatever happens I trust we can remain open to the new, the unexpected, respectful of our differences and individuality. I prayerfully hope for the growth and prosperity of our community based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The role of Council is to provide leadership. To help us to do that, we need your feedback and support. We welcome you all to have conversations with any of us or you may wish to write to Council. Correspondence is best sent to the Council Clerk (councilclerk@knoxchurch.net).

Council members are Kerry Enright (Minister), Alison Tait (Clerk), Claire Barton, Barry Brown, Phebe Chua, David Crerar, Leigh Haslam, Linda Holloway, Warren Jowett, Jordan Redding, Louisa Sinclair, Margot Skinner, and Rachel Tombs. With hope for a year full of wonder and anticipation,

— Alison Tait, Council Clerk

Welcoming students to church

It's that time of year again! Our wonderful, lively students are back in town, starting a new year in new residences and flats. Some of that "newness" might mean attending Knox for the very first time or returning after the summer break. This is a timely reminder of how we can all ensure their experience of worship and community at Knox is a positive one.

Some students will be homesick. Others will be delighted to have finally left the nest. If they live on campus, they live within an institution made up of 18-to-25-year-olds which is constantly judging them: how intelligent they are; how cool; and even how valuable.

There are those who will miss home, miss hanging out with whānau and friends and mum's or dad's cooking. They may be from other countries and speak another language. They may feel very lonely.

And the students who are excited to be out on their own, will be eager to try new things, meet new people, and find out "who they are".

Knox can be a new spiritual home for both and for all kinds of students, a friendly, caring multi-generational place in which to explore faith, perhaps in new and exciting directions and expressions.

The following are suggestions for churches adapted from an article by the Rev'd Sally Hitchiner in the UK's *Church Times*, 2 October 2015:

Let Chaplains, Christian Unions, and Student

Christian Movement know that you exist: Email them a one-sentence description with the location and main service times (you can find their contact details on various websites).

Nothing says "home" like food: Put on a lunch for new students a few



weeks into term as a chance to meet some of the congregation and hear a little about your church.

Preach on being a welcoming

Feeling welcome is the number one concern of students attending a new church.

congregation, And recognise those who are good at welcoming newcomers. Encourage your congregation to invite small groups of students for Sunday lunch, Sunday-evening pancakes, or to offer to teach them how to knit or bake, or to have a go on your rosters.

Don't forget to **show hospitality**

to international students. Get your whole congregation involved in putting on an afternoon tea to welcome them to their new country (contact the university international department or student services to advertise it).

Websites: I have yet to meet a student who does not check out the website of a church before visiting it. If you have a little section for students with events and ideas in which they might be interested,

then they will know that they are welcome.

If you are **LGBT-inclusive**, make sure you say it explicitly on your website, perhaps amid a long list of other things: "You're welcome here whatever your race, faith background,

• *Continues on Page 4*

Welcoming students to church

• *Continues from Page 3*

sexual orientation . . .” You could even email the LGBT society to let them know this fact: most of the LGBT Socs I have known assume that all churches are against them. If nothing else, it should show them that you are friendly.

Students don't always want to be part of a student group, so let them know they are welcome to join existing church groups and activities.

Mention students in sermons and intercessions, and **take risks** in giving students themselves a part to play in the services.

Find things you love about students. They are the most optimistic people on the planet: who knows what they might become? And they are great fun.

Make a point to meet and speak to students when they come to church:

Feeling welcomed is the number one concern of students who attend a new church.

Invite students to sit with you:

during worship so they don't sit alone.

Treat a student to lunch after

worship: Whether it be at home or a local restaurant, students will appreciate an invitation to talk and eat a meal that was not prepared at the dining hall.

Bring extra food for after-church



potlucks and invite the students to stay for lunch. Most students do not have kitchen facilities to prepare a potluck dish, but they want to participate in church activities.

Take a student for coffee during the week following their visit at church. Offer to **drive students** to worship. Send birthday cards, a bookmark, or words of encouragement throughout the year. Students love mail. Include students on your church newsletter mailing list. Offer **seminars or talks** on topics of interest to young adults.

Present a plant to every new student who attends worship.

Create “**care packages**” for students

before finals week. Cookies, small toys, pens, sticky notes etc make would be great gifts for stressed out students. Enclose a note wishing them well on their exams.

Adopt a student for a year, inviting them to meals and calling to be sure they are all right.

Include students in your family's holiday activities. Christmas and Easter are hard times to be far away from home.

Design a flier describing your local church and post it in the Student Union on campus. Be sure to include worship times and a map to your church.

And last but not least, **pray for them.**

Keeping a roof over our heads

The changes to the back of the church are now complete except for laying the carpet over the new flooring. Scaffolding around the main George St entrance is there to give access to the roof of the creche so that leaks and a guttering overflow problem can be fixed. Other minor repairs and moss removal is being undertaken while the scaffolding is up. This completes the external maintenance to the church building.

— *Chris Bloore (Deacons Court)*



A Complementary Life

Emeritus Prof George Petersen, leading DNA researcher, considers the thorny question of how one can be a scientist and a Christian in a secular academic world.

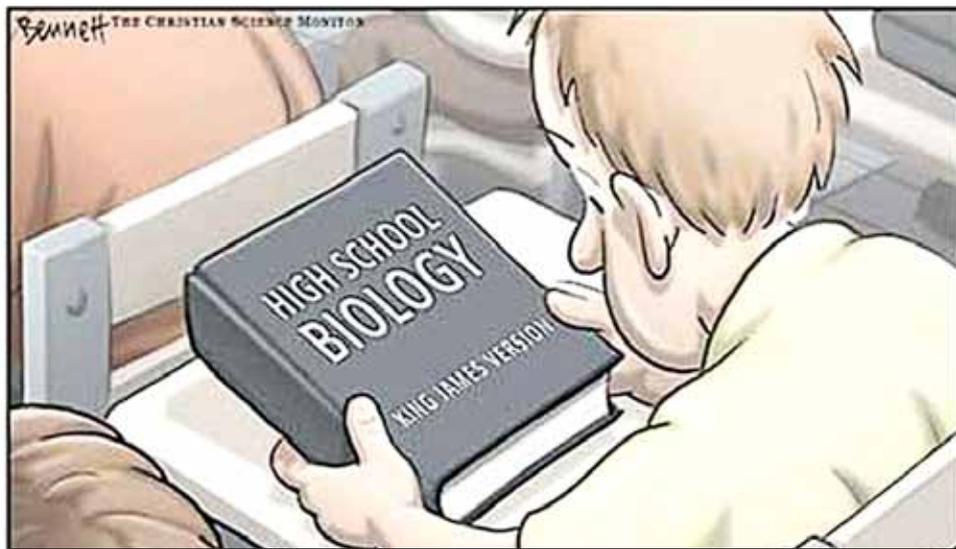
I have been a Christian all my life and became a professional scientist in New Zealand at the age of 26 after completing my doctorate at Oxford. It may have been just a sign of the times of our shared upbringing in the New Zealand of those days, but many of my colleagues in my first job were practising Christians.

Later, I became more aware that not all scientists shared my faith, but I never made any secret of my beliefs and have never been embarrassed by my own position. I have had many spirited discussions on the subject, but I have always respected the views of others, as they have respected mine.

I have never understood the perception that science and religion are not compatible. I have always believed (indeed, I was taught) that the aim of science is to describe, not to explain. In other words, a scientist's brief is to ask "how" questions and to leave the "why" explanations to the theologians.

From Copernicus to Darwin, much of the particular antagonism between science and theology arose from the growing evidence that the Old Testament accounts, especially of the creation of the universe and the age of Earth and the origin of life on our planet, were not supported by scientific observations.

But the bible is not a scientific text book. Its authors were not scientists, nor were they observers of the events they described. With the help of theologians, readers of the bible must make up their own minds about what is allegory and what is not. Charles Darwin's friend, Thomas



Huxley, coined the term "agnostic" to describe his own position of uncertainty about God's existence. Many scientists who have their doubts today would likely prefer that label to "atheist".

But there are some, such as Richard Dawkins, who have been particularly vociferous and have set themselves up almost as "high priests" of atheism. It is

their right to do so, but it seems to me that scientists who state outright that they are atheists display an almost breathtaking arrogance. Effectively they claim they know everything; but we simply cannot predict what discovery lies around the corner. In his book, *On the Origin of Species* (1869), Darwin refuted the biblical notion of *special* creation, that is, that each species

— every living thing including people — was created as a fully-formed going concern that, once created, did not change.

Instead, he proposed new species developed in two stages: the introduction of gradual, random changes in an existing population to give rise to a mixture of weak and strong individuals. The weaker were then slowly weeded out by "natural selection" to leave a population of a new species better suited to thrive than the one before.

Much has been made of this apparently random aspect of Darwin's theory. Personally, I have no quarrel with it

and am happy to accept the broad outline of the idea as Darwin has proposed it.

As we understand it today, genetic mutation — changes to DNA from one generation to the next — has a strong random element; but that does not give me any cause to doubt the existence of God. It does, however, highlight a loophole in the argument that is harder for the agnostic scientist to sidestep.

We now require an answer to another "how" question: "If the first living thing was not created as a fully-formed going concern, *how* did life originate?"

No-one has yet come up with any generally accepted answer as to how that original spark of life — a simple, single-celled organism — arose on Earth. This remains one of the greatest unsolved mysteries of science.

One thing that scientists can agree upon is that all life obeys the same general laws of chemistry and physics. Which begs the, perhaps glib, question: "*Who* or *what* invented those laws?" Here, science is at a stalemate and one has to leave it at that until there is more evidence.

But I have a much shorter answer to the question "Why do I believe in God?" that has nothing to do with science but comes from my life experience as a thinking, reasoning human being who chooses to align himself with the Trinitarian Christian

• *Continues on Page 6*

A Complementary Life

• *Continues from Page 5*

tradition.

It is an essential part of my Christian belief that the God of the bible is also a God who listens to our prayers and guides and cares for us as individuals. As a scientist, I know that my body is constructed of chemicals and that 'life' is the result of extremely complex interlinked chemical reactions, obeying the laws of chemistry and physics. I cannot prove the existence of God any more than you can, but I am comfortable with my conviction that there is something in addition to physics and chemistry that controls my life in a way that I simply cannot, and maybe never will, be able to explain. I know that I am more than a sort of clockwork mouse that runs aimlessly until its spring is wound down. I can

think, and reason and make choices.

I have a moral framework that I base on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who I believe represented the person of God on Earth, and I can do nothing but wonder at the glorious achievements in music, art and literature of other human beings who have shared the same feelings over the centuries.

It does not bother me that others might think that I am merely dodging the issue. It is the only thing that I can do and I am proud to align myself with the millions of humans who have felt the same way.

I suppose that a key question is "If I am



not prepared to talk about it openly, how do I show others at work that I am a Christian?" My simple answer has to be "By the way I live my life".

If I were asked to name a particular hero, I would find it difficult to go past James Clerk Maxwell (*pictured*), mathematician and physicist and one of the greatest scientists of the 19th century, who wrote extensively on his concept of theology. In a letter written to a friend shortly before he died, Maxwell, an Elder of the Church of Scotland, wrote: "What is done by what I call myself is, I feel, done by something greater than myself".

Can you say any more than that?

Footnote: The motto of Oxford University is "Dominus illuminatio mea" ("The Lord is my light", from Psalm 27 v.1). I have not heard of any plan to change it.

Knox Church diary

Wednesday 6 March		Ash Wednesday
Thursday 7 March		International Women's Day 2019
Sunday 10 March	10am 7pm	Lent 1: Quarterly Communion Quarterly Communion
Monday 25 March		Otago Anniversary Day (Note: church office will be closed)
Sunday 31 March	10am 2pm 7pm	Lent 4 City Choir concert at Dunedin Town Hall: Bach's <i>St Matthew Passion</i> Communion
Sunday 7 April	10am 7pm	Lent 5 (Note: Daylight Saving ends, clocks go back one hour) Worship
Friday 12 April		School Term 1 ends
Sunday 14 April	10am 7pm	Palm Sunday (Holy Week services 5.30pm Mon-Wed, 7pm Thursday, 10am Friday) Worship
Sunday 21 April	10am 7pm	Easter Day Worship

Save the dates:

3 MARCH: 10am service: The Rev Dr Clive Pearson, past principal of Sydney's United Theological College, will be the guest preacher. He will be speaking on the theology of climate change. (He's also speaking on Ash Wednesday at 7.30 on living in the Anthropocene (human) era.)
2pm: A Highlander Abroad: D.M. Stuart and Early Otago. Professor Liam

McIlvanney will give a public talk assessing Dr Stuart's extraordinary impact on early Otago. Toitu OSM museum auditorium. Free entry.

5 MARCH, 1 pm: Women's Spirituality Gatherings will reconvene in the Upper Room Chaplaincy office on the University campus. The theme for discussion and discernment will be The Feasting and Fasting of Lent, and will be led by Catholic Chaplain Amy Armstrong. The gatherings

are ecumenical and open to all women who would like to explore the life of the spirit, using prayer, readings and other shared resources.

10 MARCH: Knox family BBQ: Everyone is invited for lunch and games on the lawn next to the church following the morning service. Help us welcome new students who may be looking for a church home! Barbecue food will be provided, but please bring other dishes to share.

What Science Can Learn from Religion

The following excerpted opinion piece appeared in the *New York Times Sunday Review* on 1 Feb 2019. It was written by David DeSteno, a professor of psychology at Northeastern University.

Science and religion seem to be getting ever more tribal in their mutual recriminations, at least among hard-line advocates. While fundamentalist faiths cast science as a misguided or even malicious source of information, polemicising scientists argue that religion isn't just wrong or meaningless but also dangerous. After decades spent trying to understand how our minds work, I've begun to worry that the divide between religious and scientific communities might not only be stoking needless hostility; it might also be slowing the process of scientific discovery itself.

Religious traditions offer a rich store of ideas about what human beings are like and how they can satisfy their deepest moral and social needs. For thousands of years, people have turned to spiritual leaders and religious communities for guidance about how to conduct themselves, how to coexist with other people, how to live meaningful and fulfilled lives — and how to accomplish this in the face of the many obstacles to doing so. The biologist Richard Dawkins, a vocal critic of religion, has said that ... he has “never heard [theologians] say anything of the smallest use”.

Yet it is hubristic to assume that religious thinkers who have grappled for centuries with the workings of the human mind have never discovered anything of interest to scientists studying human behaviour.

Just as ancient doesn't always mean wise, it doesn't always mean foolish. ... In my own work [as a psychologist], ... I have found that religious ideas about human behaviour and how to influence it, though never worthy of blind



embrace, are sometimes vindicated by scientific examination.

Consider the challenge of getting people to act in virtuous ways. Every religion has its tools for doing this. Meditation, for example, is a Buddhist technique created to reduce suffering and enhance ethical behaviour. Research from my own and others' labs confirms that it does just that, even when meditation is taught and

devotion to a creed.

Findings such as these suggest that religions offer techniques — or “spiritual technologies”, in the words of Krista Tippett, author of *Einstein's God: Conversations about Science and the Human Spirit* — that help people endure difficulties, change their views or move them toward action.

These techniques seem to work

by nudging our behaviour subconsciously. Ms Tippett stresses that the ... religious traditions from which such techniques are borrowed should be understood and

Just as ancient doesn't always mean wise, it doesn't always mean foolish.

performed in a completely secular context

Another religious tool is ritual ... Research shows that ritualistic actions, even when stripped from a religious context, produce effects on the mind ranging from increased self-control to greater feelings of affiliation and empathy. Ritual can also play a part in strengthening beliefs; repeatedly stating beliefs as part of prayers — as in the Catholic Mass — may enhance

honoured on their own terms. But ... she also agree(s) that the techniques might work even when separated from their religious trappings.

If this view is right, religion can offer tools to bolster secular interventions of many types, such as combating addiction, increasing exercise, saving money and encouraging people to help those in need. ...

When I broached this body of

• *Continues on Page 8*

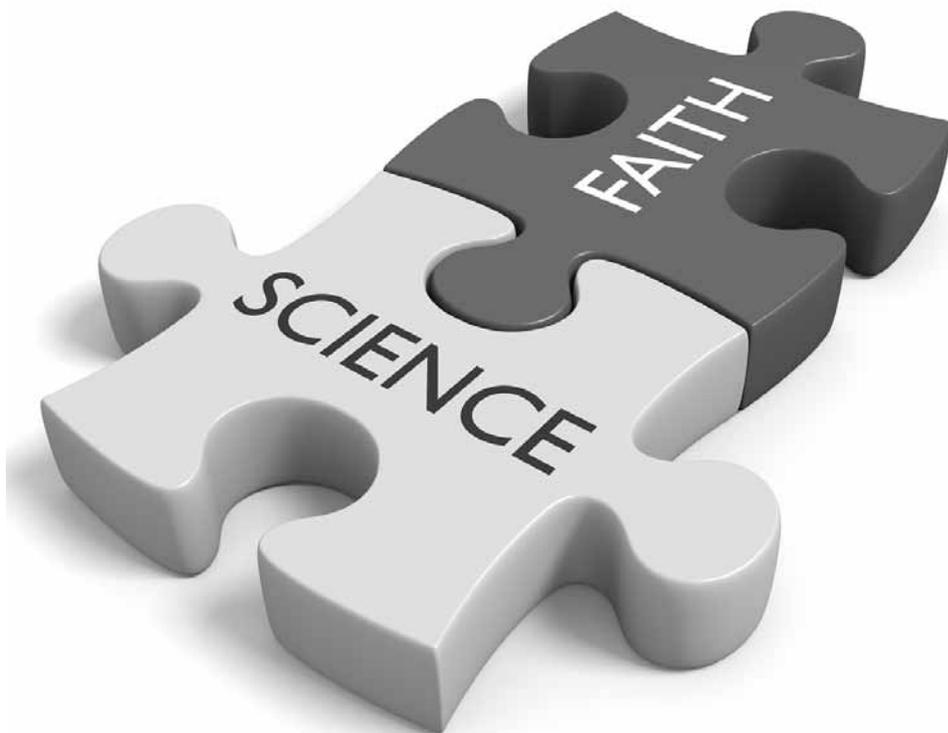
What Science Can Learn from Religion

• *Continues from Page 7*

research with the cognitive scientist and religious sceptic Steven Pinker, he emphasised that it was by no means a vindication of religion as a whole. He ... differentiates between what he calls religious practices and cultural practices, with religious ones being those more likely to have doubtful supernatural rationales (like using prayer to contact a deity for favours) and cultural ones having more practical justifications (like using ritual to foster connection and self-control).

While I can see Professor Pinker's point, ... the dividing line between cultural and religious can be blurry. The Jewish practice of Shabbat, for instance, stems from a divine command for a day of rest and includes ritualistic actions and prayers. But it's also a cultural practice in which people take time out from the daily grind to focus on family, friends and other things that matter more than work. ... Science and religion do not need each other to function, but that doesn't imply that they can't benefit from each other.

Rabbi Geoffrey Mitelman, the founding director of Sinai and Synapses, an organisation that seeks to bridge the scientific and religious worlds, told me recently that science can help clergy better aid those they counsel by showing which types of social and behavioural practices are empirically most likely to foster their



emotional, moral and spiritual goals.

Ayerning for a science-religion synergy is growing in some circles.

Ms Tippett cites as an example the Formation Project, an initiative designed by a group of millennials who are looking to cultivate their inner lives and form a community by combining ideas from psychology and neuroscience with practices from ancient spiritual traditions.

In doing this, she points out, these

young people are not blindly accepting any doctrine. They are asking questions and choosing what works based on evidence. In short, they are doing

exactly what I think the communities of scientists and clergy need to do in a more rigorous way and on a much larger scale. Will it work? That's an empirical question.

But if we choose not to investigate it, we'll never know. And I suspect we'll be the poorer for it.



Dr DeSteno's TedTalk is on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DQvRPxPEaU

Lenten Studies: Exploring the Holy Spirit

This year's Lenten study is entitled "Holy Spirit: Through Lent with First Corinthians", jointly written by Kelvin Wright (well known to Knox) and Peter Carrell, the new Anglican bishop of Christchurch, and published by Theology House.

The eight-part study series (six for Lent and two for the Easter season) will delve into First Corinthians to explore the ministry of the Holy Spirit at the centre of the Church's life. It promises

to be very rewarding.

Small study groups are being formed, and a sign-up sheet will be circulated at morning and evening services for those interested in participating.

For more information about the series, check out the following website:

www.theologyhouse.ac.nz/theology-house-publications/holy-spirit-through-lent-with-1-corinthians/

— **Jordan Redding, Education Committee Convenor**



Holy War: Religion and Violence

Peter Matheson led a three-week discussion series on Religion and Violence in February. In the first session, he posed some testing questions about our understanding of violence and our relationship to it as Christians. The group also examined these debates within the Islamic and Judaic faiths.

We live in a violent world. What have we to bring to it from our Christian tradition? This is a hugely urgent question, and closely related to those of economic and climate justice.

On the 4th of February, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar signed in Cairo an historic declaration of fraternity, calling for peace between nations, religions and races, in front of a global audience of religious leaders from Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other faiths.

The document said: “We resolutely declare that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood.”

Well, I’m an historian and, alas, religion has done all these things. Reagan’s Evil Empire. Ayatollah Khomeini’s The Great Satan. Christian crusades and inquisitions and participation in wars.

How do we balance all these with the commitment of Church people and Christian values to peace-making, not least here in Aotearoa?

As a follower of the Gospel of Peace of the man of Nazareth, I’ve worked with Christian peace groups in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Germany and New Zealand.

As I see it, there have been two huge

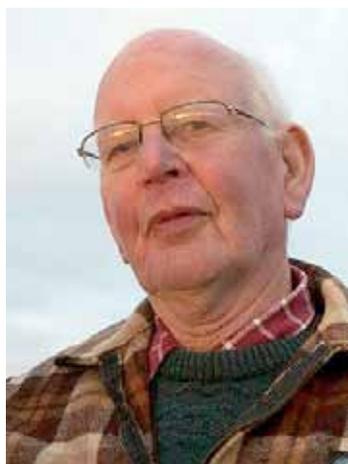


changes in our life-time:

Since 1945, of course, the situation has been hugely altered by the development of nuclear and chemical weapons.

In recent decades, most mainline Christian denominations have moved to nuclear pacifism, but not their governments: Western, Russian, the Israeli.

The other massive change is the asymmetrical nature of much modern warfare. On the one side, sophisticated weaponry; on the other what we loosely call terrorism, but which is in fact unsophisticated weaponry, stone-throwing, road-side bombs, suicide missions.



1. We need to explore what we mean by violence and religion.

2. We need to ask: Is there a legitimate case for what we might call **righteous violence**?

Where the use of force is sanctioned by religion, whether Judaic, Christian or Islamic, is it *always* an abuse of faith?

3. With its zeal, its claim on exclusive truth, its passion for justice, does religion sharpen the risk of violent confrontation? Are some types of religion, within our own Christian tradition, too, *inherently* violent?

4. Before the 18th century

Enlightenment and modern pluralism, intolerance of others, say of Catholics or Protestants, was second nature to most. We need to examine the relationship of religion to its larger, ambient culture.

5. We need to explore the religious dimension to **family violence**; elder abuse (inter-generational conflict), violence against women, against children, gendered violence.

6. We need to look at the importance of the **language** we use. For example, one person’s terrorist is another’s freedom-fighter. We need to scrutinise the sanitised language of the sophisticated (“collateral damage”, another example, being used dismissively to describe the unintended deaths of women, children and men caught up in conflict).

7. Ethicists are divided between absolutists and contextualists. In this case, are there absolute rights and wrongs about the use of violence? Or only relative, contextually varied positions (is, for example, violence “right” in one instance but “wrong” in another?)

8. Increasingly, we’ll want to focus on the practical: what can we *do* about violence in our homes, our

• *Continues on Page 10*

Holy War: Religion and Violence

• *Continues from Page 9*

communities, our nation and in the world?

How do we react to the following contradictory statements?

Religion has nothing at all in common with violence. Think of Jesus, or Gandhi or Martin Luther King: It's about love and community.

Not true: Religion is the soul-sister of fanaticism. Look at Serbia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Buddhists and Orthodox Christians raging against Muslims. Or terrorists shouting Allah is Great, as they self-immolate. Religion's "gift" to us is the **globalisation of insecurity.**

Religion is the best protection for the unborn child, the weak and the old, and the mentally ill.

Not true: Religion puts women and children under the heel of male domination.



Our best hope to transcend violence is the prophetic tradition in religion.

Not true. Look at Israel and Palestine. Look at Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Walk through the Bible Belt in the US. Look at the way the British Royal Family, with the Queen as the Head of the Church of England, gives respectability to the military. Religion sanctifies oppression.

If we think we know the answers to these issues, how can we be sure they are not just our instant, arbitrary, **emotional** responses? How can we critique our reactions, scientifically, historically, theologically? What chance have we of convincing those who passionately disagree with us, unless we have thought through our own views?

Gillian Bremner returns to PSO role

Former Presbyterian Support Otago chief executive Gillian Bremner, inset *right*, is back at her desk while the new chief is on sick leave. PSO chief executive Michael Parker was diagnosed with acute leukaemia just prior to Christmas.



Michael has already begun a series of treatments, which will be given to him over 16 weeks.

Michael is needing to take time away from PSO to focus on his treatment and recovery. Gillian Bremner has kindly agreed to be acting CEO, and she re-joined PSO in early January.

We know you will join us in keeping Michael, and his wife Gillian and family, in our thoughts and prayers and wish him a speedy recovery

The Christmas season was a very busy time for Presbyterian Support Otago. During December, we were able to put together and then give away over 300 movie tickets to teens and several hundred gifts and food packs. This was all because of the

very generous community who supported our Christmas Appeal. Our thanks to everyone who donated food or gift items for this. We've also seen many Dunedin-based people continue to generously bring clothing and household donations to our shops. Donations are always welcome, and are best delivered to Shop on Carroll at 10 Carroll St, Dunedin (no electrical goods, furniture or bedding please).

— Carolyn Sims, PSO



Vale Margaret Malcolm

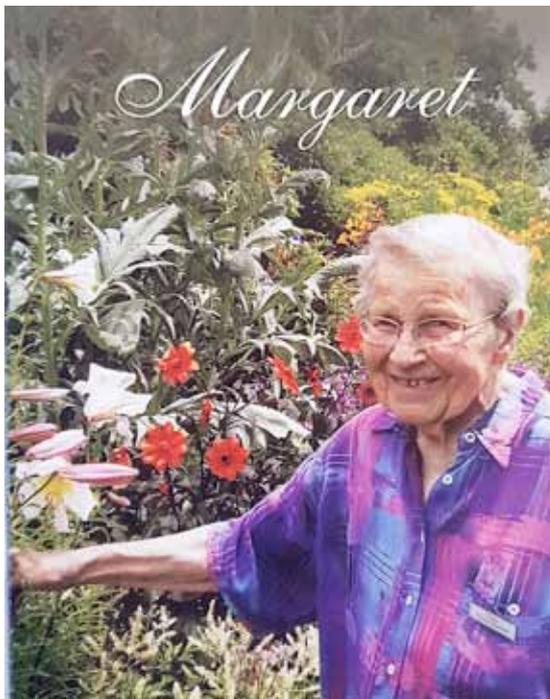
Margaret Malcolm was a caring, determined spirit with a passion for social justice.

Knox lost one of its oldest and much-loved members with the death in December of Margaret Malcolm at Abbeyfield Dunedin. Margaret Ogilvie Doreen Ussher was born in Milton, South Otago, in 1919. Along with her seven siblings, she grew up on a farm at Bull Creek some 18 miles from Milton. Much of her early schooling was by correspondence, setting her up to be a life-long, self-directed learner.

She was a Lone Girl Guide: It was at a camp for Lone Guides that Margaret shared a tent with a Guide called Frances Malcolm, who later introduced her to her brother Donald, then a medical student.

On leaving school Margaret wanted to study horticulture but the cost was prohibitive. Instead she took up shorthand typing, training at King Edward Technical College. She then worked for a Milton legal firm until World War II opened the door to a nursing career. She told of dating Donald, breaking curfews and climbing out of a downstairs window in the nurses' home to avoid the matron. Their courtship continued by correspondence while Donald was serving in Fiji and Italy during the war. Unfortunately, Margaret's nursing career was cut short when she was diagnosed with rheumatic fever, which was to have long-lasting effects. Margaret and Donald were married in 1946 and made a home in Palmerston North, becoming parents to Anne, John and Margy-Jean. When Donald switched from thoracic medicine to paediatrics, his dedication to his work, teaching and studies meant that he was often away from home. This left Margaret to run their home and do most of the parenting.

While in Palmerston North, Margaret and Donald hosted a small group helping to build the Presbyterian



Church of St Albans at Hokowhitu. Sunday School was held in their garage. John recalled his parents' sitting room being used for deacons' court meetings, jazz piano recitals by the padre's son and gatherings of Colombo Plan students. Hospitality always involved food: Margaret's treats included girdle and date scones, roast lamb, sherry trifle, American rhubarb pie and baked Alaska.

This warm and generous hospitality continued when the family moved to Dunedin in the 1960s. Margaret and Donald, with their children, renewed a long association with Knox Church where Donald had been baptised. Margaret lived with rheumatoid arthritis and its associated joint weakness, physical pain and fatigue. She spoke of the "sheer cussed determination" that helped her through many life challenges. This determination was also about making a difference for others: she volunteered for the Arthritis Foundation to support others with similar health issues to her own. She herself had survived breast cancer. Helping to establish an art class for Foundation members was an important counter-balance to physical pain. Margaret developed her talent for watercolour painting. A keen gardener, she had an astute eye for

colour, design and the beauty of nature. In retirement Donald became her picture framer and brewer of superb compost for their garden. Margaret's passion for social justice was a core element in her life and she lived this out in personal and practical ways. Quite recently she even campaigned successfully to save the post box outside Abbeyfield.

As a child Margaret had watched her mother providing food and shelter for the swaggers who arrived at the farm with nothing during the 1930s, even though the family were struggling too. "Living simply so others may simply live" was a deeply embedded strand of her life. Nothing was wasted: if she had more, she simply gave more.

Margaret's life was always shaped by her caring spirit. The deep love she and Donald had for each other enabled them to serve others. Along with their own family, they were significant friends, surrogate parents or grandparents to countless others. Her legacy includes her advocacy for those left out, her inclusive acceptance of people of diverse cultures, sexual and gender orientation long before such issues were widely discussed. Over her long life, Margaret knew tragedy and loss but probably the greatest of these was the illness and death of her elder daughter Anne, a biochemist, keen climber, talented artist and a mother. She and Donald helped to care for Anne during the year of her illness. Margaret and Donald both had a deep Christian faith which they continued to explore, joining the Sea of Faith movement. Margaret talked with Kerry not long before she died about how she had a sense of having a presence alongside her all her life. "I don't say the word God", she said, "although I don't mind others using the word".

Margaret Malcolm's life was celebrated at her funeral in Knox Church on 15 December. Vale, Margaret.

— *Compiled by Helen Thew, from eulogies given by Margaret's son John and daughter Margy-Jean Malcolm*

Rev Dr Judith McKinlay: Superb teacher, scholar, friend

This is taken from a eulogy given by Peter Matheson at Judith's funeral on 15 February. She had been a long-time member of Knox and will be remembered by many for her astute and insightful guest preaching.



Gender matters. The text matters. Authenticity matters. Aotearoa matters. All these are core

convictions of the biblical scholar, Dr Judith McKinlay, but for many of us who knew and loved her “ultimate credo” might be “Integrity matters”. It was an integrity which cost her dear. It is also the reason why we hold her in such high regard.

She was a superb teacher but always more than that. She flowed into the very lives of those around her. Mary Huie Jolly: “She was a friend like no other.” Doug Lendrum: “She brought the Hebrew women in the bible alive and vibrant for me both in her studies and her being.” Mike Stack put it very movingly: “A big sister, a mentor, a dearly loved friend.”

Hebrew scholarship stands high in our tradition. Judith recognised the apostolic succession in which she stood. [She was] described as a “dream

student” (though not a dreamy one) and linguistically gifted. True as she was to the tradition, though, she was genuinely original, not only in what she said, but in how she said it. And she won an international reputation precisely because of this. Judith the poet, Judith the music lover, brought

her feel for language, her sensitivity to the counterpointing of music, to her scholarship. A favourite term of hers, bricolage, expressed how she spliced together past and present, the dark and luminous sides of ancient biblical history, with the dark and luminous challenges of our own time. She taught us that we read the text, or are read by it, according to where we stand. Only a fool could miss the passion which she brought to her work: “What we do as biblical scholars and how we do this is the underlying driving force in all my work, along with my commitments to both feminist and contextual concerns.”

Judith presented as diffident, reserved, even to a superficial mind as deferential. She could drift through a gathering of people quiet as a nun.

She didnae shout her wares. All the more remarkable, then, her adamant stance when causes she was committed to were at stake.

These causes, needless to say, were seldom fashionable. She was a feminist in the church when few had the faintest clue about where she was coming from. She studied with the sharp intensity that was hers the injustices done to Maori people, not least the Tuhoe. She lived in and for and by the wisdom and wonder of the Hebrew bible.

Yet none of us can begin to imagine Judith as strident, as preachy. Rather she devised incredibly novel, daring and ingenious strategies to nudge us into new cognitive territory. In Judith's hands, scholarship becomes live drama. In her inaugural professorial lecture, Judith talked of Sarah and Rebekah as Israelite wives, and of the texts about them “continuing to live, their very repetition witness to that, witness to different communities who received them, told them to each other, interpreting and reinterpreting them”.

A new and living story. That is Judith's gift to us. She had a high sense of vocation, to be true to the text. To be true to the text of the world. We are going to miss her.

— Peter Matheson

Adieu “Mrs MacLeod”: popular former OBHS matron

Isobel MacLeod, *right*, died in Brisbane on 5 February 2019. She was 93.

Isobel (“Mrs MacLeod”) was the Matron of Otago Boys' High School boarding establishment, School House, for 20 years, retiring in 2000.

Her position was a way of life for her rather than a job. Her commitment to the hostel boys started with their arrival in Year 9 (Form 3) and continued considerably past the end of their schooling.

She was a very popular Matron, being broad-minded and having a wonderful sense of humour. She was widely recognised as having a very positive effect on the maturing of the boys. Indeed,

many parents and boys kept in contact with her long past her retirement. Since 2000, Isobel has enjoyed time with her family, and in 2009 moved to Brisbane to live with her daughter Fiona. For many years, Isobel was a member of Knox Church, attending services regularly, more often than not sitting with her great friend Phyllis Varcoe. She was an active member of APW and was always interested in all aspects of the Knox Church community. After moving to Brisbane, Isobel and Phyllis corresponded weekly until Phyllis's death in 2017. Isobel will be remembered fondly by many.

— Patti Matheson



Blessed are the Birds

Warren and Marita Jowett are about to lead American tourists on a three-week birding tour of NZ — the “second to last” before the Jowetts retire. Here, Warren (right) reflects on what conservation has meant to him as a lover of God’s creation.

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. (Psalm 1:4)

This is a favourite Bible passage for me, epitomising the kinds of marvellous, generous and well-meaning people you meet when you get involved in conservation or environmental work. For Marita and me, it’s been mainly Forest and Bird and lately Birds New Zealand.

We’ve been leading birding tours for many years now, and have, for the most part, enjoyed our interactions with people and, of course, the birds.

A highlight for me in 2018 was seeing Sirocco (*inset below*), the kakapo who is called a Department of Conservation ambassador. It was a thrill to see this iconic and rare bird-with-attitude.

Our Orokonui volunteer guide stopped us on our way to Sirocco’s enclosure for a short talk. She pointed with her torch to a magnificent 400-year old rimu and said that when it was a sapling growing in a vast forest there would have been kiwi, moa, kokako and kakapo roaming around. But now they have all disappeared: the moa never to return, and the other three birds living in small vestiges of their previous ranges. (Yes, I included kokako. I am one of those who believes that the South Island kokako still survives).

Seeing Sirocco was quite an emotional event for me. This amazing parrot, once very common in our forests and now living on two highly protected off-shore islands, is one of our conservation success stories. Like the takahe and black robin, it has been brought back from the brink of extinction.



Looking back, I didn’t always have this kind of emotional response to birds and conservation in general, but over time, it has grown and deepened. When I was 10, my family shifted from Petone (near Wellington) to Invercargill (which in 1950 felt like being near the Antarctic). We were a sporting family and it was not surprising that much of my spare time was spent playing cricket and rugby. As a family, we didn’t go out tramping but Dad was a keen and not very successful amateur fisherman and I remember spending hours with him beside the Oreti and Mataura Rivers.

At secondary school, my interests broadened to include tramping, thanks to a keen teacher who formed a tramping club at Southland Boys’ High School. But it was a secondary activity and became more so as I spent more and more of my time training for and competing in athletics. But there were some highlights in the outdoors.

The summer before I enrolled at the

University of Otago, a friend and I climbed to the top peak and the Double Cone of The Remarkables. We had no climbing gear, little experience and shouldn’t have been there, but we survived and found it exhilarating. On another occasion we tramped into Lake Hauroko, camping in a hermit’s camp, the only sign of human activity in this then remote part of Fiordland.

I studied botany and geography and completed a master’s thesis on the vegetation of the Tahakopa Valley in The Catlins. My focus was entirely on the plants and I am ashamed to

say that there were probably mohua/ yellowhead in the bush then and I took no notice. There may have even been rock wren in the Remarkables!

Marita and I loved tramping with our family, and I guess my interests started to change, and probably thanks to the kids.

We took notice of the plants and later the

birds as we tramped.

They were as excited as me at finding mohua in the Caples Valley. But this



• *Continues on Page 14*

Blessed are the Birds

• *Continues from Page 13*

excitement changed to concern when I fell from a tree that I had climbed to take a photograph! I began teaching and soon learnt that the most enjoyable aspect of teaching biology was getting out of the classroom on field trips. Conservation issues were my favourite topics.

Most of my teaching was imparting knowledge — “head information” — genetics, basic human biology, photosynthesis, respiration, nitrogen cycle — all, of course, with the goal of preparation for external examinations. That was the way we thought and taught, utilitarian, transactional, and centred on progress and development.

But conservation, for me, was something different — it was “heart knowledge”.

I read recently of what artist Colin



McCahon strove for in his painting: he hoped to open people’s eyes to the possibility of a relationship with the land.

“I saw something logical, orderly and beautiful belonging to the land and not

yet to its people.” On one of his famous Northland panels he inscribed the words, “A landscape with too few lovers”.

In my work as a teacher, when I got on to a conservation topic, such as endangered species, I hoped that my students would become lovers of our fauna and flora. And now, as Marita and I guide American birders around New Zealand, I hope that they, too, come to be lovers of our special birds and plants.

New Zealand’s fauna and flora are part of God’s creation and they have been dealt

some terrible setbacks. Caring for them is helped by head knowledge, but their future will depend on our heart knowledge and getting a little emotional at times.

A Poem on the Eve of Lent

by Austin Crenshaw Shelley

God’s beloved dust,
fabric of the universe —
of planets newly discovered
and ruins ancient, broken
and us.

God’s beloved dust,
we’ll walk into wilderness
on a Wednesday —
a wilderness of words
and want
and wonder,
a wilderness for the wise
and the weary.

God’s beloved dust,
ushered from pew to pastor,
they will pause.
Eyes averted
or closed
or resolute in meeting mine,
an awkward encounter



breaking the boundary of space —
to touch another’s face
and to mark it
mortal.

God’s beloved dust,
thumb to forehead,
brokenhearted,
breaking with tradition,
I will say

to God’s beloved dust —
to the squirming infant
barely a month from the womb,

to the mother, headscarfed,
halfway through chemotherapy,
to the wrinkled widow
well acquainted with ashes:

Remember you are God’s beloved dust
and to God’s beloved dust you shall
return.

And we will watch and wait
to witness
what God can do
with God’s beloved dust.

—Austin Crenshaw Shelley serves as an
associate minister at the Presbyterian
Church of Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia.

Dubbed “The Ash Queen” by her
colleagues, she has come to appreciate
the earthiness of the season of Lent.

This poem was published in *Women
Clergy International online magazine*,
February 2017

Youth Group Ahi Kā action stations



Kia Ora. The last couple of months of 2018 were very busy for our youth group, Ahi Kā. We worked through more of the Bible Project, held a BBQ at John and Myrtle Rough's home, and, of course, put on the end of year Youth and Children's Christmas service.

Last year, we studied Luke and Acts, along with a few special sessions such as poppy making with Jordan for Armistice Day. This term we will be watching the Torah series, diving deeper into the Old Testament, before leading up to Easter with some other videos.

Our event for term 4 was a BBQ at the Roughs'. We had a table tennis tournament and, after a few rounds of Exploding Kittens (a card game!), Jordan mentioned spoons (another game — get the youth to teach it to you), so the kitchen drawer was raided and much noise ensued. Overall it was a wonderful evening and we would like to thank John and Myrtle again for their hospitality.

The Christmas play-based service, "A Christmas to Believe In" was a big hit, with many compliments from the congregation on an excellent performance, so well done, guys! This service also allowed Ahi Kā to tell the full Christmas story, as most services focus on just the manger and birth, from before John the Baptist's birth through to the flight from Herod. This brought out people such as Zachariah and Elizabeth who some youth didn't know about, allowing them to explore relationships and families within the bible.



Before Ahi Kā started up for this year, we had a Waitangi Day get-together out on the peninsula, with some wonderful pot luck food at the Sim-Elder's, followed by kayaking on the bay. It may not have been the warmest of days, but the youth got stuck in and from the various seagull impressions and shenanigans, had a great time. Thanks to John and Janet for the kayaks, life jackets and opening their home to us.

Looking ahead, we are hoping to have our young people attend Easter Camp at the A&P Showground in Mosgiel.

*God Bless,
Ahi Kā Team*

Sunday School 2019

After an amazing Christmas Service led by our youth group and Sunday School, all the teachers had a well-deserved summer break.

For 2019, we are very fortunate to have the same core Sunday School teachers, Liz Somnium and Claire Barton along with myself, Louisa.

The focus of 2018 was all around giving and we found having a theme worked really well. The theme for this year is Jesus beyond church. We want to explore with the children how Jesus can be a special part of our lives everyday, not just at church on Sunday.

We are also going to help the children to say prayers at home, school and everywhere in between. We start each Sunday School lesson sitting in a circle and each child rolls one of the prayer cubes. There are three options it can land on — Sorry, Please and Thank You.

Depending what is rolled, that child then says a one-line part of our prayer. We want to also expand on last year's bible lessons so the children are familiar with reading from the bible and are able to look up verses in the bible with ease.

— *Louisa Sinclair*

Knox people

After 23 years of singing with Knox Church Choir, Tanara Stedman will be leaving Dunedin soon to study music therapy for two years in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The baritone soloist hopes eventually to make this a career in music therapy and, one day, hopes to return to Dunedin.

He hopes to make a return visit to Knox before setting out for his study adventure.

Curiosities:

The wooden Celtic cross in the side chapel has the same measurements, deliberately, as the brass cross on the communion table. Underneath the wooden one, in neat pokerwork, is an inscription saying that the cross was made for Knox Church by Mr Grigor, the wood-working teacher at Logan Park High School, in 1993.

The horizontal beams which rest high up on the side walls of the church are called “hammer beams”, and the curved beams which spring upwards from them are called braces. Together they enable the wide wooden roof to stay in place and not fall on us! The decorative pieces along the



hammer beams are called “dog-tooth” moulding (I have no idea why).



Along the highest ridge in the ceiling are three pairs of wooden lattice-work carvings. These cover three pairs of ventilators (but you would need a really good torch to pick them out).

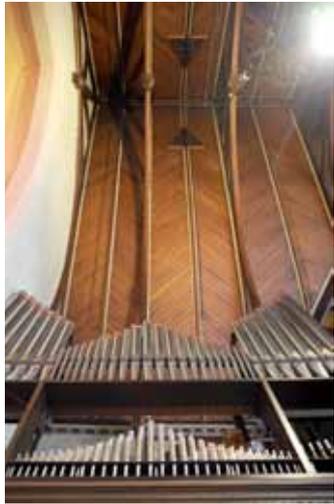


Where can you see graffiti in the church? The late Jack Thomson, a long-time choir member, alerted me to this in the days when the choir sang the Introit from the upstairs gallery.

There are names — not just scratched — but carved into the woodwork.

Jack’s theory was the Otago Boys’ High School boarders had been at work before the chapel was created in the 1961 alterations, and the boys sat downstairs thereafter. I checked the names against a school roll, and found correlations mostly from the 1930s, which I suppose makes it historical graffiti!

— Lyndall Hancock



Delivered by:
Contact:

Contact Information

Minister: Kerry Enright
477-0229, 0274 675-542 or
email minister@knoxchurch.net

Clerk of Council
Alison Tait 476-1778
or 021 136-2404
alison.tait@xtra.co.nz

Clerk of Deacons Court
Suzanne Bishop 476-3271
suzken.bishop@xtra.co.nz

Planned Giving Secretary
Helen Thew 471-2147
r.h.thew@xtra.co.nz

Organist & Choir Director
Karen Knudson 477-2749

Church Officer
Benjamin Thew 477-0229
churchofficer@knoxchurch.net

Parish Office
Church secretary:
Jacqui Carroll,
449 George St
Phone (03) 477-0229
Mon-Fri 9am-Noon

449 George St, Dunedin, 9016
admin@knoxchurch.net
www.knoxchurch.net

Knox News is published quarterly by Knox Church, Dunedin. Editor: Jill Rutherford, jill.rutherford@outlook.co.nz 03 477 0891/ 021 0844 5122. Contributors: Helen Thew, Chris Bloore, Alison Tait, Kerry Enright, George Petersen, Peter Matheson, Warren and Marita Jowett, Patti Matheson, Carolyn Sims (PSO), Jordan Redding. Photos: Ian Thomson and others. Design: Scott Blackwell. If you have any story ideas or suggestions, please contact Jill.