

SEPTEMBER 2018

ST ANDREWS

MATAWHERO



FOR OUR

JOURNEY TOGETHER

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We are a diverse community called together by
Jesus Christ to welcome, love, serve and care

HAERE MAI – AFIO MAI EVERYONE IS WELCOME

GISBORNE PRESBYTERIAN PARISH

St Andrew's Church, 176 Cobden Street Gisborne
Matawhero Church, Church Road, Matawhero

PEOPLE NEWS



BIRTHDAYS IN SEPTEMBER

Benita Kape, Barbara Pole, Muriel Hall.

Deaths: Mary Franklin, Merle Webber,
Dawson Hillyard

Our sincere condolences to the families.

WALKING GROUP

Departs St. Andrew's 9:00am each Monday morning - whatever the weather. Do join us for an hour's exercise followed by a 'cuppa'.

OPEN DOOR Tuesdays at 10:00am



PASTORAL CARE

If you need transport to the Church Service at St Andrews please phone St Andrew's office 868 5513.

Gisborne Presbyterian Parish

WEBSITE has been completely redeveloped and is now our internet connection sharing information and photos with the world! If you have not yet had a look, please go to standrewsgis.org.nz

FROM THE PCANZ GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MODERATOR

The bottom line in ministry today, I find that there are still some basics in ministry that make our task a lot easier: good relational skills, a sense of humour and an ability to refrain from defensiveness. Add to this a deep commitment to the health of our soul and allowing God's Word to shape us daily and this contributes significantly to the resilience of those who take up the call. But, for my money, something else rates as a bottom line for those in ministry and it's this...

The knowledge that my main task in this endeavor and effort and dreaming is, first and foremost, to hear Christ. I am and can contribute little without this and, indeed, may well betray Christ in the very act of trying to serve Him unless I am hearing Him.

It's not just that hearing is the key to wisdom and to building something that lasts, (Matt 7:24) or that it is the key to fruitfulness (Matt 13:23). Nor is it that the very definition of being in Christ's family is in the act of hearing (Luke 8:21) or that hearing is, in fact, half the work of salvation (John 5:24) that sets hearing apart for me. It is the very next verse that holds the key to a successful ministry: *²⁵Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and those who hear will live.* (John 5)

As this verse explains, the resurrection power of Christ is activated by hearing the "voice of the son of God" and today we need that power in ministry. The Kingdom of God is precisely a matter of power says Paul (1 Cor 4:20) and it will be served only as we allow that power to be demonstrated through our weakness.

But, it is not our weakness which is the note of God's power – this is just the instrument on which the note is sounded. Rather it is our hearing that releases the note and makes a pathway for God's power to be at work. As Paul says... *"⁴My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power."* (1 Cor 2:4-5)

God Bless you all
Richard Dawson

GISBORNE PRESBYTERIAN PARISH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SUNDAY

23 SEPTEMBER 2018

following the Sunday Service
all welcome to attend

Many folk commented favourably on Wellspring's Spring Service.

We publish two poems composed by the Lapointe family. On the back page you will find a delightful colourful picture and poem by Sophia Sener-Groves.

Sabine Lapointe wrote:

Seasons
Possibilities
Refreshing
Inspiring
New
Growth

Time
Innocent
Meaningful
Enthusiastic

Danielle Lapointe wrote:

Seeds awakening and coming forth
Pouring down rain, bursting rivers
Renewal of energy and growth
Incrementally more daylight
Newborn wooly lambs napping
Golden daffodils nodding, in time

THE EVOLUTION OF EARLY RELIGIONS INTO WORLD RELIGIONS

Since the earliest days of humanity religion has played a part in both structuring life and explaining life. Through ritual, myth and legends, dance, art, buildings, beliefs, teachings and daily practices, faith has guided inspired and shaped the way we live. As with all things human, even those touched by the divine, this has led to great acts of generosity and great acts of arrogance; it has brought peace and it has created wars; religion, like any human endeavour brings out the best and the worst in people.

Our knowledge of prehistoric religion is necessarily scant and uncertain. Our only evidence is archaeological, and the range of interpretation from any one artefact or site is enormous. In the final analysis, our best theories are only speculation.

The great sites include the famous Chauvet and Lascaux cave paintings over 30,000 years old found in France in 1994. The depiction of animals may represent a symbolic invocation of the animal spirits to fill the hunters with power, or to increase the number of animals to be hunted.

There are spectacular prehistoric sites such as Stonehenge in Wiltshire UK dated 4,000 to 3,000 BCE. These probably had a ceremonial or dramatic function, and perhaps an astrological alignment. There are many other stone circles in England, Scotland and Europe.

Religion for billions of people, is a vital way of making sense of their life and of giving sense and meaning to existence. Through ethical and metaphysical theology, and through ceremony and liturgy, religion imbues people with a powerful sense of meaning. Many attempts have been made to define religion, most of which fail before its vast diversity, but one factor that links almost all religions is their

belief in a reality beyond the material world, there is something greater than just the here and now.

Sumaria, the earliest known city civilisation, set the religious tone for the rest of Mesopotamia. Sumaria seemed to be saturated with divine presence and its concept of myriads of Gods and Goddesses, each controlling their own aspect of life, together with sacrifices required to humour them, greatly influenced other Mesopotamian religions. All these ancient religions were poly-theistic and related to a particular area. Life was so difficult, they were fighting all the natural forces of drought wind, rain, thunder, lightning, volcanoes, tsunamis, earthquakes etc. It is not surprising that they should want to understand and control these natural phenomena. Their most effective endeavours were found to be through humans who said these outlandish occurrences were caused by mysterious gods whom they should get to know and placate with worship with offerings of food and friendly acknowledgement.

After many centuries of polytheistic worship quite an amazing change occurred. The period 800 – 200 BCE has been termed the Axial Age. In all the main religions in the civilised world people created new ideologies that have continued to be crucial and formative. The new religious systems reflected the changed economic and social conditions. All the main civilisations developed along parallel lines even when there was no commercial contact (as between China and the European area). There was a new prosperity that led to the rise of a merchant class. (Muhammad began life as a trader.) Power was shifting from king and priest, temple and palace, to the market place.

The new wealth led to intellectual and cultural fluorescence and also to the development of individual conscience. Inequality and exploitation became more apparent as the pace of change accelerated in the cities and people began to realise their own behaviour could affect the fate of future generations. Each region developed a distinctive ideology to address these problems and concerns. Taoism and Confucianism in China, Hinduism and Buddhism in India and philosophical rationalism in Europe with Socrates Plato and Aristotle. The Middle East did not produce a uniform solution but in Iran and Israel, Zoroaster and the Hebrew prophets respectively evolved a different version of monotheism. Strange as it may seem, the idea of 'God', like the other great religious insights of the period, developed in a market economy in a spirit of aggressive capitalism.

Like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion that still survives today in Iran with a few hundred thousand followers. It is thought to have been founded in

1200 BCE although others quote 588 BCE by Zarathustra later known as Zoroaster. Its first adherents were pastoral nomads of Afghanistan – Persian border areas. Subsequently Zoroastrianism became the chief faith of Persia before the arrival of Islam.

The religions of India and Persia in Zarathustra's time were polytheistic. Zarathustra formulated a new religion that attempted to concentrate the many gods of these faiths into one, Ahura Mazda, meaning Wise One. Ahura Mazda, it seems, appeared to Zarathustra in a vision and appointed him to preach *asha* - the truth. Creator of the universe and the cosmic order, Ahura Mazda brought two spirits into being. One was the spirit of truth, light, life and good, Spenta Mainyu. The other was Angra Mainyu, the spirit of darkness, deceit, destruction and death. World history comprises the ongoing cosmic struggle between the two Mianyus. Ahura Mazda is therefore not omnipotent but he and Angra Mainyu represent the contest between good and evil or truth and lies, which is weighted in favour of the former. Humans must join the cosmic struggle, bringing both body and soul to the contest, but they must not debilitate themselves by fasting or celibacy, both of which are forbidden by Zoroastrianism.

Ahura Mazda is represented by fire, which is believed to be a manifestation of the power of creation and God's divinity. Fire is a sacred element of Zoroastrianism and is used in all religious ceremonies. The focal points of worship are the fire temples which house a sacred fire that must not be allowed to go out. Priests are responsible for fuelling the fire, and must constantly purify themselves to avoid contamination including wearing a mask to cover the nose and mouth.

Humans are judged on the basis of whether good or evil predominated in their lives. After that souls are consigned to heaven, the best existence or Hell, the worst existence. Zoroastrianism, a fundamentally optimistic faith, teaches that collectively the good done by humanity will eventually transform the world into a heavenly utopia and when time ends all souls will be saved.

The religious experience of India developed along similar lines but its different emphasis will illuminate the peculiar characteristics and problems with the Israelite notion of God. The rationalism of Plato and Aristotle is also important because Jews Christians and Muslims all drew upon their ideas and tried to adapt them to their own religious experience, even though the Greek God was very different from their own.

In the seventeenth century BCE, Aryans from what is now Iran had invaded the Indus valley and subdued the indigenous population.

They had imposed their religious ideas, which we find expressed in the *Rig-Veda*. There we find a multitude of gods expressing many of the same values as the deities of the Middle East and which presented the forces of nature as instinct with power, life and personality. Yet there were signs that the people were beginning to see that the various Gods might simply be manifestations of one divine Absolute, that transcended them all. Like the Babylonians the Aryans were quite aware that their myths were not factual accounts of reality but expressed a mystery that not even the gods themselves could explain adequately. The religion of the Vedas did not attempt to explain the origins of life nor to give privileged answers to philosophical questions. Instead, it was designed to help people come to terms with the wonder and terror of existence.

A revised interest in karma, the notion that one's destiny is determined by one's own actions made people unwilling to blame the gods for the irresponsible behaviour of human beings. Increasingly the gods were seen as symbols of a single transcendent Reality. The revived interest in the old Indian practice of *yoga* (the yoking of the powers of the mind by special disciplines of concentration) meant that people became dissatisfied with a religion that concentrated on externals. Sacrifice and liturgy were not enough they wanted to discover the inner meaning of these rights. The prophets of Israel felt the same dissatisfaction. In India, the gods were no longer seen as other beings who were external to their worshipers; instead men and women sought to achieve an inward realisation of the truth.

The gods were no longer important in India. Henceforth they would be superseded by a religious teacher, who would be considered higher than the gods. It was a remarkable assertion of the value of humanity and the desire to take control of destiny: it was the great religious insight of the subcontinent. The new religions of Hinduism and Buddhism did not deny the existence of the gods nor did they forbid the people from worshiping them. In their view such repression could be damaging. Instead, Hindus and Buddhists sought new ways to transcend the gods, to go beyond them. During the eighth century the *Upanishads*, known collectively as the *Vedanta*, the end of the Vedas appeared. By the end of the fifth century BCE there were about 200 *Upanishads*. They gave a distinctive conception of godhood that transcends the gods but is found to be intimately present in all things.

The whole world was seen as the divine activity welling up from the mysterious being of Brahman, which was the inner meaning of all existence. It was a process of revelation in the literal meaning of the word: it was an unveiling of the hidden ground of all being. Everything that happens becomes a manifestation of Brahman.

Brahman cannot be addressed as thou: it is a neutral term not he or she but strictly impersonal. It does not respond to us in a personal way, sin does not offend it and it cannot 'love' us or be 'angry', Thanking or praising it for creating the world would be entirely inappropriate. This divine power would be utterly alien if it were not for the fact that it pervades, sustains and inspires us.

The eternal principle within us is called Atman. Atman prevented God from becoming an idol, an exterior Reality 'out there', a projection of our own fears and desires. God is not seen as an add-on to the world but rather *is* the world.

This is henotheism, allowing minor gods, or pantheism – all is God. Like the gods, reason is not denied but transcended. The experience of Brahman or Atman cannot be explained rationally any more than a piece of music or a poem. Intelligence is necessary for the making of such a work of art but it offers an experience that goes beyond the purely logical or cerebral faculty.

The Buddha did not deny the gods but believed that the ultimate reality of Nirvana was higher than the gods. When Buddhists experience bliss or a state of transcendence in meditation they do not believe that this is from contact with a supernatural being. Such states are natural to humanity; they can be attained by anybody who learns the techniques of Yoga. The Buddha taught that life was suffering and that it was possible to overcome suffering by living a life of compassion for all human beings, speaking and behaving gently, kindly and refraining from clouding the mind with drugs or alcohol. The only thing that counted was the good life; if it were attempted, Buddhists would find that the Dharma was true, even if they could not express this truth in logical terms.

The Greeks, on the other hand, were passionately interested in logic and reason Plato (427–346 BCE) was continually occupied with problems of epistemology (methods of knowledge) and the nature of wisdom. He was also influenced by the sixth century philosopher Pythagoras, who may have been influenced by ideas from India, transmitted by Persia and Egypt. He believed that the soul was a fallen polluted deity incarcerated in a body as in a tomb and doomed to a perpetual cycle of rebirth. He had articulated the common human experience of feeling a stranger in a world that does not seem to be our true element. Plato also believed in the existence of a divine, unchanging reality beyond the world of senses, that the soul was a fallen divinity, out of its element, imprisoned in the body but capable of regaining its divine status by the purification of the reasoning powers of the mind.

In the famous myth of the cave, Plato describes the darkness and obscurity of a man's life on earth: he perceives only shadows of the eternal realities flickering on the wall of the cave. But gradually he can be drawn out and achieve enlightenment and liberation by accustoming his mind to the divine light. These ideas were stable, constant realities which could be apprehended by the reasoning powers of the mind. They are fuller, and more permanent and effective realities than the shifting, flawed, material phenomena we encounter with our senses. The things of this world only echo, 'participate in' or 'imitate' the eternal forms in the divine realm. There is an idea corresponding to every general conception we have, such as Love, Justice and Beauty. The highest of all the forms, however, is the idea of Good. Plato had cast the ancient myth of the archetypes into a philosophical form. His eternal ideas can be seen as a rational version of the mythical divine world, of which mundane things are the merest shadow. He did not discuss the nature of God but confined himself to the divine world of forms, though occasionally it seems that ideal Beauty or the Good do represent a supreme reality. Plato was convinced that the divine world was static and changeless. The Greeks saw movement and change as signs of inferior reality: something that had true identity remained always the same, characterised by permanence and immutability, the unmoved mover. This utterly static image of divinity would have an immense influence on Jews, Christians and Muslims, even though it had little in common with the God of revelation, who is constantly active, innovative and, in the Bible, even changes his mind as when he repents of having made man and decides to destroy the human race in the Flood.

In the new ideologies of the axial age there was a general agreement that human life contained a transcendental element that was essential. The various sages we have considered interpreted this transcendence differently but they were unified in seeing it as crucial to the development of men and women as full human beings. They had jettisoned the older mythologies absolutely but reinterpreted them and helped people to rise above them. At the same time as these momentous ideologies were being formed the prophets of Israel developed their own traditions to meet the changing conditions, with the result that Yahweh eventually became the only God.

Pre-axial religions were territorial, the gods were known by the people of the local land area. This changed during the axial period when wise men attracted followers from larger areas and the older religions were deserted. Some of these are Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Taoism, Celtic Religion, Buddhism and Shintoism. Despite many revolutions religion has progressed through the dark ages of feudalism to the 14th century renaissance, the 16th century

reformation with Martin Luther, the scientific revolution with Sir Isaac Newton, the 18th century French revolution which imprisoned the pope. While religion may seem to be at a low ebb in Europe, Pentecostalism is flourishing in Africa and the numbers of worshipers are rising world-wide.

Time and space are insufficient to examine all of these early religions separately let alone the neo-religions of the people of Sparta 650 BCE, Druids 400 BCE and Gnostics 100CE which could not be accommodated on this sheet. However, of more concern is the impact they have had in the development of all the major religions of the present day. The attached chart sets out the relationships between the Western Monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity and Islam: and the pantheisms of Eastern Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, and also the Atheists.

Graham Shearer, August 2018

ADDENDUM

Sparta was a city state in Italy in 650 BCE, renowned for its dominant military power although conquered by Rome in 146 BCE. Mythology says the King Lacedaemon was the son of Zeus by the nymph Taygete daughter of Eurotas.

The Druids were members of a professional class in Celtic cultures, first mentioned to serve Julius Caesar in Rome in 100 CE. They conducted religious rights, were adjudicators, had medical knowledge and practice, and were political advisors to national leaders. They disappeared around 750 CE.

They taught that the human soul was indestructible and returned again in a new body at a later time.

The Gnostics, 1st 2 centuries CE, said the divine spark in all human bodies could be liberated by Gnosis (Gk. Knowing). This evil world was created by a demi-god, and to Know the Spirit or good God the Gnostics had 'secret' knowledge which they revealed to their elitist followers.

The Convocation of Nicaea 325 CE called by Emperor Constantine. Jesus was both human and divine – Athanasius – Western Church of Rome.

Jesus was human not divine – Arius – Eastern churches of Greece and Russia.

The Cappadocians, Basil and 2 Gregories, explained the trinity. Father – Transcendent. Son (Logos, John) - creative. Holy Spirit – immanent.

Three properties of the soul. Knowledge, self-knowledge and love.

Kerygma – public preaching, **Dogma** – deeper meaning needing experience.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit only terms to describe our human knowledge.

The real God is unknowable indescribable and transcendent – beyond us. God is not an objective reality but a spiritual experience.

The major Gods of Greece and Rome.

Zeus	Jupiter
Hera	Juna
Athena	Minerva
Poseidon	Neptune
Aphrodite	Venus
Ares	Mars
Apollo	Apollo
Artemus	Diana

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Directory

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Published last Sunday of the month or as close to (except December)

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We are aware that many of our Church family are unable to attend our Sunday Services on a regular basis, and so we are attaching below, a tear off slip to enable you to continue your financial support to our Church.

Or if you would prefer to make a donation electronically our a/c details are:

GPP 030638 0462917 00 for internet banking or

.....
**Please send cheques The Office, Gisborne Presbyterian Parish,
PO Box 1117 Gisborne 4040**

Name: _____

Address: _____

DATES FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

Saturday	1	8.00am	Annual Monster Garage Sale – St Andrew’s
SUNDAY	2	9.00am	Matawhero Communion <i>Rev Mary Petersen</i>
		10.00 am	Worship Service <i>Frank Darcy</i>
		2.30pm	service at Motu for Presbyterian & Anglicans
Monday	3	9.00 am	Walking Group
Tuesday	4	10.00 am	Open Door
Wednesday	5	9.45am	mainly music
Friday	7	1.00pm	choir practice
Saturday	8	8.00am	Car Boot Sale
SUNDAY	9	No Service at Matawhero	
		10.00am	Communion & Celebration Sunday <i>Rev Mary Petersen</i>
Monday	10	9.00am	Walking Group
Tuesday	11	10.00am	Open Door
		12.30pm	Worship Committee mtg

Tuesday	11	1.30pm	Ryman Service
		2.30pm	Beetham Service
Wednesday	12	9.45am	mainly music
Friday	14	1.00pm	Choir practice

SUNDAY 16 **9.00 am** **Spring Flower Service**
10.00am **Spring Flower Service**
Rev Mary Petersen both services

Monday	17	9.00am	Walking Group
		7.00pm	Think Tank mtg lounge
Tuesday	18	10.00am	Open Door
Wednesday	19	9.45am	mainly music
Thursday	20	3.30pm	Dunblane service
		7.00pm	Parish Council Meeting
Friday	21	1.00pm	Choir practice
Saturday	22	8.00am	Car Boot Sale

SUNDAY 23 **No Service at Matawhero**
10.00am **Worship Service**
Rev Mary Petersen
11.30am **Annual General Meeting**
GPP

Monday	24	9.00am	Walking group
Tuesday	25	10.00am	Open Door
Wednesday	26	9.45am	mainly music
Thursday	27	2.00pm	Leighton House
Friday	28	1.00pm	Choir practice

*******DAYLIGHT SAVING STARTS 30th Sept – put clocks forward when you go to bed on Saturday night*******

SUNDAY 30 10.00 At Matawhero church
Combined Animal Blessing service with St Andrew's and St David's

DATE CHANGE: The first carboot sale in October will be on the first Saturday 6th

CONTEMPLATION BY Richard Rohr

We cannot have a private contemplative practice without engaged community. We must not withdraw to a private, isolated spirituality in which we do our contemplative sit each day and ignore the pain of the world.

The capacity for nondual seeing that is developed through contemplation allows us to be happy, rooted in God, Comfortable with paradox and mystery, and largely immune to mass consciousness and its false promises.

The hope of spring, the knowing spring will come,
Is a powerful metaphor to us of how faith and hope
Work to open us to new things, to love, the kind of
Abundant love that renews our creativity and
Enables us to reach out to others lovingly.
For most of my life I have understood this well
Hope and love remain, these three, but the greatest
Of these is love, as if faith and hope are kind of cancelled out.

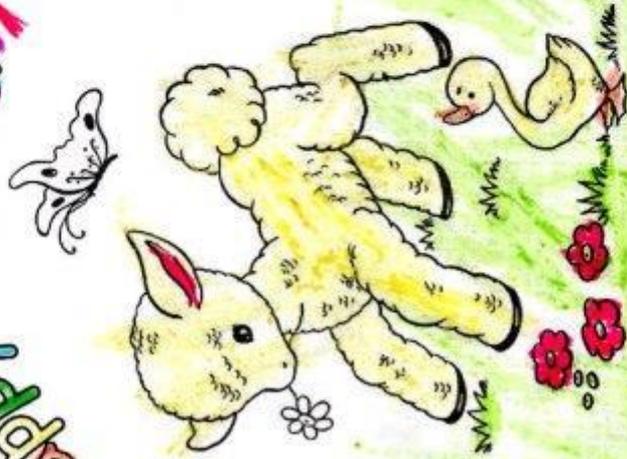
But Richard Rohr's teaching has deeply opened to me the exquisite and powerful relationship between these three – that faith and hope enable and open us to love, and to receive love.

Stephanie Dowrick

Parish Council Report for August

- A donation of \$100 has been made from the mission funds to Sabine Lapointe for her mission trip to Africa.
- Planning is underway for the 'Over 80's' Spring Flowers.
- Fundraising – the regular car boot sales continue to be a good source of funds for the church. The Annual Garage Sale is 1st September.
- The resignations were accepted, with regret, from Beverley Smith as Editor of Signpost and Lorraine Corbett from Parish Council.
- The Ministry Settlement Board meeting on 11 August agreed to return to being Gisborne Presbyterian Parish Board only, now that Richard Rangihuna is to be appointed as Pastor at St David's Church, once Richard is commissioned.
- Jan Ewart has agreed to be Gisborne Presbyterian Parish Representative at the General Assembly in October.
- It was agreed we would become a Guardian Angel Church with Presbyterian Support once Joel's (our Tear Fund child) sponsorship is finished.
- It is to be discussed with Rev Mary Petersen on her return, the need to update the minister's office computer.

God
Spring
Happy



Write a poem about
things you can see and
hear in Spring-time.

in the night i hear
Crickets playing a nice
labbby well cat-fight
in the night. i hear
Owls hogting a nice song.
when I wack up I have
fun when the sun shines.
by Sofia Sener

There are lots of things
that we can thank God for