

# Welcome to Presbyterian Parish St Andrew's, Gisborne

Sunday Service 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020 led by Lynnor Cooke

Theme: The joy of sharing with Christian friends

## Reflection

During the first COVID lock-down, I found plenty to do. I wrote a lot of letters and connected with friends by phone. I tidied cupboards, washed blankets and enjoyed my garden. Not for one moment did I feel lonely.

How can anyone feel lonely with the full-time company of three lovely cats, the attention of neighbours calling over the fence, delightful and uplifting articles in the letter box and the certainty of a constant open "presence" with me-especially in the garden.

I'm sure that many folks felt the sensations of "something more" that prompted the caring and thoughtfulness of the time!

While going through some old recipe books, an idea for one of our monthly retirement home services came to me in the form of a "forward" written by a minister of an earlier parish. Memories of wonderful friendships made with manse families and church members came flooding back, and I just had to share them. With plenty of time to compile a short service and with material enough to prepare two or three, it was opportune for me to share my thoughts with you today.

In the 57 years my husband and I were married, we were members of six different churches. Terry was employed by the National Bank (originally in Blenheim), bank staff were transferred as promotion so we found ourselves in Wellington, Trentham, Levin, Auckland and Tauranga. Our retirement took us to Matarangi, where we travelled to church in Whitianga. Mary Peterson ministered about the same time.

Every church and community has an opportunity to make new friends and face new challenges. We were truly blessed wherever we went. Our lives were enriched, our faith grew and matured with the variety of leadership and fellowship we encountered and enjoyed.

I cannot portray every minister who nurtured us, but must share a little of two of the four who became special friends during the 32 years we attended St Enoch's Church in Tauranga.

Neil Whimp had a great sense of humour and fun. This is Neil's, forward to the fund-raising cookbook that the APW produced, most of you know that APW is Association of Presbyterian Women. We knew each other as friends rather than just acquaintances. And Neil writes in the "Forward", it's always good to be close to good food and there's nothing better than fine fellowship, but when the two are combined, the recipe for something special is present. Food and good company together often provide more than each could alone. Each on its own is without the satisfaction that togetherness brings. Recipes offer a creative combination of ordinary elements into an experience designed to nourish, entertain and satisfy, and so two occasions for people to be together. Jesus seems never to have missed a chance to share a meal with people. And in each case, something happened more than the diners expected. A life was enhanced, encouraged, changed. St. Enoch's APW has done it again with this collection of recipes designed to

combine the creativity of cooking with the blessing of being together. May the experience that has brought this collection to us enhance, encourage and nourish us as we combine common commodities creatively causing choice and complimentary comments coming constantly from our chosen connoisseurs

Yours in internal anticipation.

Rev Neil Whimp 1998.

The last part of it is quite challenging. A bit like a tongue twister but clear Neil Whimp. He always had a smile.

Neil and his wife Jill correspond every Christmas with wonderful leaders of news of growing up family and mutual friends. Neil often used day to day occurrences in his sermons, usually surprising his congregations; One Sunday as Neil left home to travel the 10 to 15 minutes to St. Enoch's on his moped scooter, a neighbour, flagged him down and offered a box of freshly picked tomatoes. Neil gladly accepted the gift and strapped the box onto the little carrier. As he buzzed into the church drive, the box fell off bruising and splitting some of the fruit. None were wasted, however, as there were plenty of offers to make sauce for the upcoming fair. Neil's sermon that day was about how God uses damaged and broken people! And I must add, we used to share a wonderful tomato sauce recipe that has a third of a bottle of sweet chili sauce it up and you can also make it into chutney by just thickening it. My grandson loves it.

Another manse family where Neville and Rosemary Harris, whose children were of a similar age to our two girls, they to keep in touch at Christmas, Neville was sometimes asked what his occupation prior to becoming a minister was? His reply, a life insurance agent. And that's what I still do.

Occasionally, Neville would be heard exclaiming quite loudly, "Oh Benmore", we would smile knowing he was annoyed in some way. He had informed us that that was the biggest dam he knew!

Rosemary Harris was an accomplished pianist, a blessing in any church, and accompanied afternoon services and many choir practice and recitals. A lovely friend always calm and compassionate.

There is much joy in sharing a faith with like minded people. Sadness and hardship over the years is inevitable, but when the bond of faith is shared, it halves a load of sadness and worry.

Before Christ's crucifixion, John's gospel, 14 verse 15 records that Jesus promised his followers that he would ask God to send them a helper who would stay with them forever. Again, in Luke, 24 verse 49, after the crucifixion, when Jesus appeared to his friends, he told them, I myself will send upon you what my father has promised, but you must wait until the power comes down upon you!

We cannot doubt this promise was fulfilled and extraordinary power was given to ordinary people, which allowed them to speak publicly, teach, preach, baptise and heal amongst the diverse and dangerous rulers and religions of the time. We must acknowledge every promise Jesus made and every blessing given by the grace of God. For we are a family of privileged people, known and loved by God, the Creator, the saviour, and our friend.