

## **OUR VISION**

**Our vision is to be a living, caring church  
at the heart of our communities -  
Celebrating worship, offering support.**



**HOLYTOWN PARISH CHURCH  
OF SCOTLAND**

**JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015**

Dear Friends,

February is one of those months which are neither here nor there in the calendar for we are not yet through the depths of the winter months and have yet to reach the brighter months of spring.

However, inevitably it is one of those months of the year which has great significance for many - for it is the month of St Valentine and so forevermore associated with love!

I admit to being a romantic at heart - and I do enjoy watching a good love story!

Who could not be touched by the likes of 'You've got mail' with Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks of 'Hope Floats' with Sandra Bullock and Harry Connick Jr.?

Both of which I will always watch when on TV - much to Graham's consternation!

St Valentine's Day may not be for all - but we should never forget that love is at the very heart of the Christian Life.

That life begins when we discover God and that we are loved in a very personal and intimate way by him and from that discovery on grows our love for him and then in response to all his love for us we in turn should have that outpouring of love for others around us.

I know it is often considered a trite saying but love does indeed make the world go around - certainly for us as Christians!

Wanting to be loved is such a basic human need - don't we all cry out for love?

Isn't it wonderful when we know that we have value and worth in the eyes of someone?

And while romantic love and human relationships do seem to fulfil some of that aching need for love within us - ultimately no one can love us as perfectly as the one who is the lover of our souls.

So for our need for love to be fully satisfied we have to turn to God and the intimacy of knowing Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Many of us at times do feel unworthy of God's love - we let our past mistakes haunt us and sometimes we even find it hard to allow ourselves to be loved and to accept that we are loved unconditionally.

Yet no matter how we feel, the true lover of our souls will find ways to communicate his love for us - be that through scripture or prayer or the words or touch of a friend.

So as we move into a new year why not take time to listen to what God has to say to you and recognise that you are indeed his beloved and he loves you dearly.

Relax in his presence, rest in a place of loving acceptance and see yourself - however unworthy you may feel - as someone is divinely loved.

Loving Blessings to you all  
Caryl

## FLOWER LIST

Feb 8	C Boyd
15	Nan McGlone
22	Agnes Taylor
Mar 1	-

There are still a number of Sundays vacant through the year. Please add your name if you wish to give flowers.

## LOOKING BACK AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas 2014 was most enjoyable for all of us as a church. Looking back over the many events we have many to thank for their contribution to our enjoyment.

We should like to thank Davina and David Paterson, Glen Baillie and David Shaw for decorating the Christmas tree in the church and the one by the side of the road leading to the church. This was greatly appreciated.

Our inaugural **Christmas Dinner** was on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December. In all 71 were present. The meal and the Karaoke which followed were much enjoyed. Our sincere thanks to Isa Hinshelwood for the tremendous amount of work she did to ensure the success of the evening. You will note that the title 'inaugural' was used - look out later in the year for information about our next Christmas Dinner.

We should like to thank everyone who brought gifts to the Gift Service. The response was overwhelming. Thank you, one and all.

A big "thank you" to the Girls' Brigade for decorating the Church Hall so tastefully.

Our thanks to David Paterson, aided by Glen Baillie for arranging all the Christmas mail ready for distribution. Our thanks too to the boys of the Boys' Brigade who were the postmen.

Christmas would not have been Christmas at all if we had not had the children of the Sunday School performing their Nativity Play. The children were excellent. Their enthusiasm was infectious and added to our enjoyment of the story of the nativity being told once more. Our thanks too to the Sunday School staff for their guidance of the children.

On the final Sunday of the year we had "Nine Lessons and Carols". Our thanks to all who participated and a special "thank you" to Stewart McNeil for conducting the proceedings.

Finally, we should like to thank our Minister, Caryl, for all the extra effort made during this very special time in the Christian calendar. We do appreciate how much time and effort she put into making Christmas 2014 one to remember.

## **CONGREGATIONAL NEWS**

**A Scots Night** will be on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 6.30 pm in the Church Hall. More information will be available later.

**Thank you** - We would like to record our thanks to Stuart Baxter of Baxter Land Services for his kind donation of the stone which was placed in the landscaped garden area at the Church Hall. Special thanks to Brooke (Stuart's youngest

daughter) who assisted him with the landscaping of the garden. Their time and efforts have brightened up a dull and drab part of the church gardens.

## **TIME FOR REFLECTION**

Christmas was great as usual, New Year was what it was and we're now drawing to the end of the longest month of the year. Although March, May, July, August, October and December have the same number of days as January, January most certainly in my book feels by far, the longest of them all. I can't come up with a plausible reason but it does not prevent speculation eg getting billed for all the excess expenditure in the run-up to Christmas, the drabness of homes and shops when the decorations are taken down, the traditional dip in temperatures, occasional difficult conditions underfoot affecting walking and driving and the ability to get out and about. I imagine all these things may contribute to the perception that the 31 days in January take longer to pass than the equivalent amount of days at any other time of the year. I'm sure there are other reasons but my creative juices have dried up temporarily due to the exceptionally low temperatures!!!!

When I'm out walking my wee dog in the mornings I reckon it's my favourite time of the day. It provides time to think, to pray, to contemplate. It's the time when you can tangibly experience the world waking up. Only this morning I was wondering what the tiny little bit of the world where I live would look like without all the tarmac, slabs and buildings that man has built upon it. I know one thing for certain, that no matter the amount of rooms a house has, no matter how wonderful the conservatory/extension looks, no matter how fancy the car

in the driveway looks, no structure or vehicle can ever outshine that which God created. Evidence of God's creation is all around us. When I was out walking the other morning on fresh snow, the tracks of a fox were evident. Despite the ground being hard and unyielding, rabbits were still discovering morsels with which they could satisfy their hunger. From Robins to Magpies, the cold seemed to bother them a lot less than it was bothering me. Although a red sky in the morning is an indicator of bad weather, the sunrise I witnessed the other morning was for its brief duration also incredibly beautiful. I reminded myself that all of these things make up a miniscule amount of God's creation and some would say all this including the seasonal changes have happened as a result of some big accident!

#### Matthew 16, verses 1-3

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times."

This is also the time when I make the annual appeal for articles for the magazine. Many folks depend on the magazine as their only link with the Church. Now that Elizabeth has the website up and running and the magazine is now available to read online, folks that live overseas can once again catch up with what's happening in the church and in the village so new and relevant content will always be appreciated.'

## **FAR FLUNG PLACES IN THE WORLD**

Recently an article telling of the arrival of Christianity to New Zealand two hundred years ago - on Christmas Day 1814. In 2014 a commemorative service was held at the same spot. The Kiwi Carol, *Te Harinui* ('Glad Tidings') which retells the coming of the gospel was sung.

*Not on a snowy night  
By star or candlelight,  
Nor by an angel band  
There came to our dear land,*

*But on a summer day  
Within a quiet bay,  
The Maori people heard  
The great and glorious Word.*

*The people gathered round  
Upon the grassy ground,  
And heard the preacher say  
I bring to you this day.*

*Te Harinui  
Glad tidings of great joy.*

*A man was driving to work when a lorry drove through a stop sign, hit his car and knocked him out. Passers-by pulled him from the wreck and revived him. He began to struggle and had to be tranquillised. Later, when he was calm, they asked him why he struggled. He said, "I remember the impact, then nothing. I woke on a concrete slab in front of a huge "Shell" sign. But somebody was standing in front of the S.*



## A PSALM FOR TODAY FROM DOWN UNDER

When I consider the immensity of space I bow before you  
Lord,  
I worship the great God, who made black holes and galaxies.  
When my eyes light upon the skies at sunset I say 'Look what  
our God has done,'  
Amazed I stand at twilight as the colours illuminate the arch of  
Heaven,  
I look at men, I'm flummoxed that they say there is no God,  
Knowing God says that they haven't any excuse because it's  
downright obvious.  
Everything has cause down here and everything has purpose.  
You have a plan for each of us, and you are our Creator.  
Your plan is set in concrete. My feet walk securely on a firm  
footing,  
I take joy in the path I tread, for You will not be moved.  
My ship will not falter on the mountainous seas for You are  
there,  
Your presence is my assurance constantly.  
Are we there yet, Lord Is it much longer to await the day  
When Yeshua arrives to rule in radiant majesty? How long?  
I see the over-arching blueness of the sky and shout your  
praises day and night.  
Morning and evenings hear my cry of Hallelujah to your Name.  
I stand upon a mountain top and salute you with my uplifted  
hiking stick.  
I play with that stick like the drum major as on the crest I leap  
for joy.  
It isn't enough to shout your praise. I call upon the people to  
join me.  
If people won't rejoice with me the trees and rocks and hills

will dance.  
For all of nature shouts your honour, hollers your glory, weeps  
your holiness.  
Tears of deep, deep joy flow, free. We bellow, 'Glory to your  
Majesty,'  
Never enough of giving our praise to You. Never enough of  
giving our thanks to you,  
Thank you from hearts is pouring. Praises from our souls are  
streaming.  
You are royal and you will win the day,  
Crowned in Victory, Bridegroom have your way.

(This Psalm was written by the wife of a friend from Bordertown in South Australia.)

## **UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS**

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to thy name, O Most High, to declare thy steadfast love in the morning, and thy faithfulness by night." (Psalm 92:1-2)

Thank You, God, for little things  
that come unexpectedly  
To brighten up a dreary day  
that dawned so dimly.  
Thank You, God, for sending,  
a happy thought my way  
To blot out my depression  
on a disappointing day.  
Oh, God, the list is endless  
of things to thank You for,  
But I take them all for granted  
and unconsciously ignore

That everything I think or do,  
each movement that I make,  
Each measured rhythmic heartbeat,  
each breath of life I take  
Is something You have given me  
for which there is no way  
For me in all my 'smallness'  
to in any way repay.

Helen Steiner Rice

## **FITTING IN WITH A PLAN**

Many years ago it was my duty and privilege to teach those in S1 to S3 Religious Education. Some sessions would be spent going through the Old Testament using the School Bible. The stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses were considered one by one. For me the most fascinating story is that of Joseph. How well these young people could identify with what, in their eyes, was an upstart. Little brothers did not make any claim to being in control of big brothers. That was out of the question. But in Joseph's case that was eventually going to be the truth.

Joseph is thrown into a cistern and then sold. The treasured robe made by his father is stained with goat's blood and taken home. Joseph is sold to Potiphar, one of the Egyptian Pharaoh's officials. He was later put in charge of the household. But Joseph's misfortunes were not over. Thanks to Potiphar's wife Joseph is imprisoned.

From his childhood Joseph had dreams and was able to interpret them. This came into play due to the dreams of the

butler and the baker. His ability to interpret dreams continued to be called upon. Pharaoh had visions of seven fat cattle, followed by seven lean cattle and of seven full ears of corn followed by seven which withered and were blown away. This foretold seven good years of harvest and then seven of famine. Joseph was released from prison and put in charge.

The crunch comes when his brothers make their way to Egypt to buy corn. The dream of his brothers bowing down to him did come true.

The ups and downs of Joseph's life were God's way of preparing him for the years of famine. Thanks to his being in Egypt his family survives the famine. God's purpose for Joseph and the part he was to play in God's plan was finally crystal clear. With God nothing ever occurs by chance.

## **GRACE**

A country preacher decided to skip services one Sunday and head to the hills to do some bear hunting. As he rounded the corner on a perilous twist in the trail, he and a bear collided, sending him and his rifle tumbling down the mountainside. Before he knew it, his rifle went one way and he went the other, landing on a rock and breaking both legs. That was the good news. The bad news was the ferocious bear charging at him from a distance, and he couldn't move.

'Oh, Lord,' the preacher prayed, 'I'm so sorry for skipping services today to come out here and hunt. Please forgive me and grant me just one wish . . . Please make a Christian out of that bear that's coming at me, Please, Lord!'

That very instant, the bear skidded to a halt, fell to its knees, clasped its paws together and began to pray aloud right at the preacher's feet.

'Dear God, bless this food I am about to receive . . .'

(A Box of Delights - J John & Mark Stibbe)

## **SO SWIFT THE WAY! SO SHORT THE DAY!**

In this fast-moving world  
of turmoil and tension,  
With problems and troubles,  
too many to mention,  
Our days are so crowded  
and our hours are so few,  
There's *so little time*  
and *so much to do . . .*  
We are *pressured* and *pushed*  
until we are "dizzy"  
There's never a minute  
we're not "crazily busy"  
And sometimes we wonder  
as we rush through the day -  
*Does God really want us*  
*to hurry this way?*  
Why are we impatient,  
and continually vexed,  
And often bewildered,  
disturbed and perplexed?  
Perhaps we're too busy  
with our own selfish seeking  
To hear the dear Lord

when He's tenderly speaking . . .  
We are working so tensely  
in our self-centred way,  
We've no time for listening  
to what God has to say.  
And hard as we work,  
at the end of the day  
We know in our hearts  
we did not "pay our way" . . .  
But God in His mercy  
looks down on us all,  
And though what we've done  
is so pitifully small,  
He makes us feel welcome  
to kneel down and pray  
For the chance to do better  
as we start a new day,  
And life would be  
if we learned to rely  
On our Father in heaven  
without asking "why" . . .  
And if we'd remember  
as we rush through the day,  
*"The Lord is our Shepherd  
and He'll lead the way" . . .*  
So don't rush ahead  
in reckless endeavour,  
Remember *"He leadeth"*  
and *"Time is forever"!*

Helen Steiner Rice

*An English professor wrote the words, 'a woman without her*

*man is nothing' on the blackboard, and directed the students to punctuate it correctly.*

*The men wrote: 'A woman, without her man, is nothing.'  
The women wrote ' A woman; without her, man is nothing.'*

*Punctuation is everything.*

*(A Box of Delights - J John & Mark Stibbe)*

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## KIA ORA - Visiting the Maoris

The Maoris, who originally came from Polynesia, began in New Zealand around the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. Maori beliefs place a strong emphasis on the importance of family and community. And living in harmony with nature.

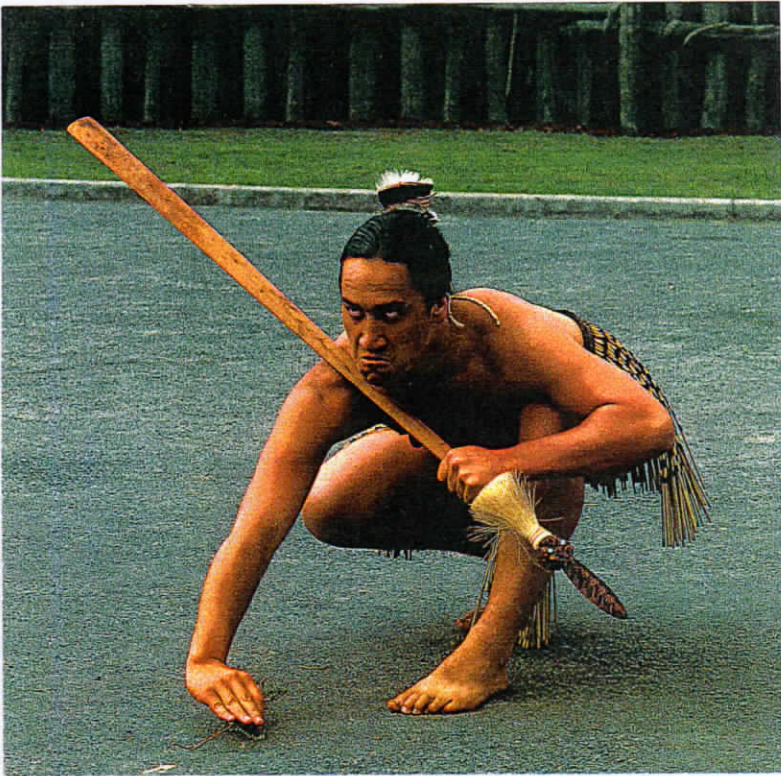
Our first meeting was in a hall where young ladies demonstrated a few of their dances. The men performed a number of hakas - reminiscent of what happens when the All Blacks play at Murrayfield.



Our next port of call was a **Marae**. This is a sacred place for the



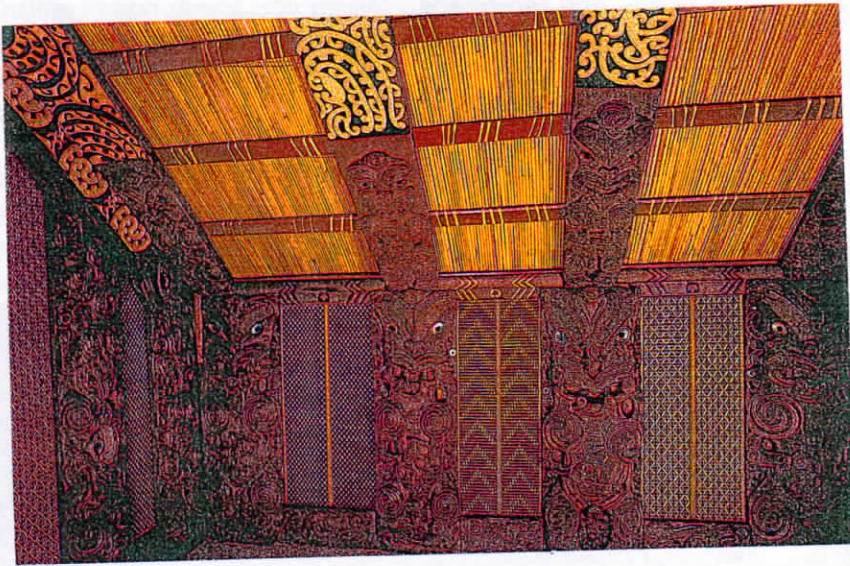
Maoris. On arrival one of our group was chosen as our leader. He had to show that we had come in peace. The ceremony began with a Maori warrior placing a peace offering on the ground. The leader we had chosen went forward and picked it up. The Maoris knew then that we had come in peace.



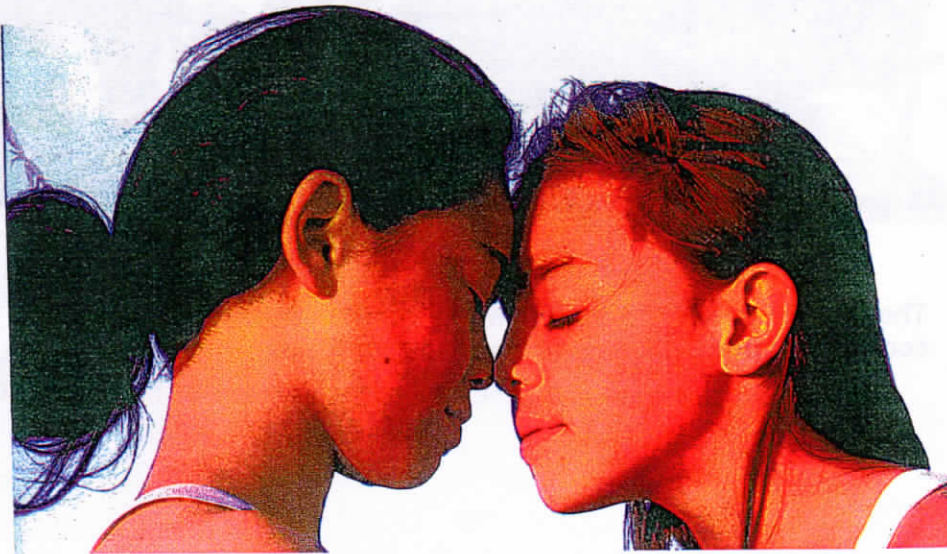
As we entered the Marae the women welcomed us. As this is still a male dominated place, the men sat at the front with the women taking up the rear. (Perhaps this is reminiscent of the Tabernacles we read about in the Old Testament.)



We were welcomed with speeches initially in the Maori language and then in English. These speeches showed that the Maoris are very spiritual and acknowledge God, those that have "passed on" and finally welcomed all who were present.



All of us were given instructions on how to pronounce Maori words. This enabled us, equipped with the words of a Waiata (a song in the Maori language) to join in singing in support of the speaker.



The most moving part of our visit was when we were invited to join in the traditional welcome, the **hongi**. What is the hongi? This is the touching of noses and foreheads. When you touch noses with your host your breath mingles together and you become one. When you touch foreheads you exchange and share knowledge. This welcome is very sacred to the Maori people.

The picture below is of the **hangi**. This shows members of a host tribe perform a passionate haka and song for visitors, watched over by tribal ancestors in the photos behind them.



The food for a hangi - a feast of meat, kumara and other vegetables cooked by heated stones in an enclosed earth oven.