

**Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa  
New Zealand  
ST NINIAN'S PARISH NEWS  
June/July 2025**



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## Moderator's Pentecost message 2025

Tēnā koutou katoa

A reading set down for Pentecost:

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

*[John 14: 25-27]*

On Pentecost Sunday we read the Scriptures and reflect on the continuing story of our journey of faith with the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit. We have the promise from Jesus that the Holy Spirit will teach us, lead us deeper into the truth of God, and remind us of the teachings that Jesus has already given us. We will experience the nudgings and the insights of the Holy Spirit in our living, and know the peace that Jesus offers us – a peace that gives wholeness and freedom from fear. There is much to celebrate!

At the time I was preparing to write this message, I spent three days at a women in ministry gathering at Te Maungarongo Marae – our Church’s national marae in Ōhope. During our time together there was a workshop on marae tikanga and it was interesting to learn that every marae has its own mauri (life force, essence), and at Te Maungarongo the mauri is the Holy Spirit.

So many people who come to this marae talk of how special it is, of how they feel close to God in this space, how they feel a home-coming, a welcome, an integration, a deep connection. The Holy Spirit is at work and is known. It is also known there through the people of Te Aka Puahou who give such manaakitanga (hospitality), which builds whanaungatanga (relationship). In step with this we think of the relational nature of the Holy Spirit as guide, teacher, advocate, counsellor, comforter. All things come together to provide a holy space.

It feels like Te Maungarongo is similar to what the Celtic Christians call ‘a thin place’ where the boundary between the material world and the spiritual or divine is perceived to be particularly thin. Where it is more permeable. A sacred place. What a gift.

In this season of Pentecost, where we reflect more deeply about the work of the Holy Spirit in our individual and corporate life, can we attend to that phrase from the Anglican prayer book which is used after Scripture is read: “Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church”. What do we feel the Spirit is saying to us, the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, at this time? Can we be attentive to the nudgings of the Holy Spirit, within and around us?

As we prepare for General Assembly in October, let us adopt a posture of listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us so that we can be all that God desires for us, individually and as a national Church. Discerning. Integrated. Energised. Engaged. Hopeful.

May the warmth and the promptings of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Right Rev Rose Luxford

*Moderator Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*

## What’s been happening:

**Presbytery Elder:** After more than 20 years’ service, Kelvin Chapman has resigned from his role as our Presbytery Elder. We are extremely grateful for the time and contribution that he has given to us and to Presbytery, where he served for many years on the Property and Finance committee. We would like to have another person to represent us. The role is to attend meetings and vote on behalf of our parish. If this is something you would be interested in doing please speak to Pam or Stephanie.

Now that the Presbytery system has been restructured to the wider Alpine Presbytery, it only meets twice a year. The meetings move around the Presbytery, from Nelson, across to the Coast and down as far as the Waitaki River. About 40 – 50 people attend. If we aren’t there to have a say we can’t complain about decisions that are made.

**A Relocatable Office:** (see later article) We made enquiries with St Teresa's church but they did not have any spare office space. We were in discussion with the Rattray St Baptist church about space they had but it was going to involve too much toing and froing. Besides, we wanted a presence on site, and the New Hope Evangelical church also wanted office space. It made good sense to purchase a relocatable and then sell it when our new facility is built. A Congregational meeting in May passed the motion to purchase the building.

**Easter Services** were led by Rev Chris Elliot on Maundy Thursday, Rev Hugh Perry on Good Friday, and Rev Barbara Peddie on Easter Sunday (including Communion). Thanks to these people for their excellent leadership. As usual we had a group from St Teresa's join us on Good Friday. Terry Wells did one of the readings for us. We celebrated with Hot Cross buns for morning tea.

**Riccarton Community Liaison Group:** Pam and Jean continue to attend these bi-monthly meetings which are held in different community buildings. It is good to know what is happening in our area and to let others know what we are doing. We have been added to the Oak Development Trust newsletter recipients so we can share that with our people.

**Kingdom Living:** worship group are now back using the Riccarton lounge for worship. Due to illness they had a break for some time. The first time they came they were surprised to see that the hall had gone. Welcome back!

**Worship Roster:** Rev Chris Elliot has produced the Worship Roster up to the end of January 2026. Thanks to Chris for performing this service over the past few years. She says next year it is someone else's turn.

**Working Bee:** many thanks to those who helped sort and pack up our resources and possessions from the hall and office spaces. They shifted furniture and fittings, move boxes into storage around the city, unscrewed things from walls and set up the new office space. Special thanks to Kelvin who shouldered the responsibility while Pam and Lance were away.



## From the office:

At the moment there is no office phone line connected. Should you wish to get in touch please email [stninians05@gmail.com](mailto:stninians05@gmail.com)

## Update on the Redevelopment Program:

The hall, kitchen, office and small meeting room were efficiently cleaned out over the course of May- with some items being relocated around the place and others to new homes via Trade me.





## Arrival of the temporary office:

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> a rather large delivery arrived. A temporary building has been acquired by the parish for use as our office while the rebuilding gets under way. Meredith is sharing this with the administrator for New Hope. The power was turned off to the hall on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, with the demolition beginning on June 10<sup>th</sup>. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who's donated their time to helping move everything out of the Hall and into its new homes- particularly from your office administrator!

## **Memories of the St Ninan's Hall**

By the time you read this, the old hall will have been demolished, after over 100 years of service to the parish and other users.

In its old age the hall was quite shabby and leaked badly in heavy rain, but it survived the earthquakes when so many similar buildings didn't.

The late Judy Agar, whose grandfather built the hall in its original form, would have said its survival was because of the high standard of her grandfather's work.

At first the hall served as the worship centre for the parish, becoming "the hall" when the church was completed.

My memories of the hall go back to about 1948, when the Busy Bees held their annual sale of work in the hall, which seemed very big.

At that time it had one toilet, no kitchen, and the substantial stage was where the office block has sat for the past 40 plus years. There was an older building behind the hall, known as the Sunday School building, where women's groups, Busy Bees and some Sunday School and Bible Class groups met. When I was in Std 4 (Year 6), my Sunday School class was on the stage, possibly without heating.









The late Rev Ron Townsend told me that when he was a student at Canterbury University (about 1950), he had a holiday job working on the construction of the hall's side rooms.

Whether it was the whole construction or enlargement, I don't know, but the doors etc have always looked original.

(Addendum: As of today, 10 June, I can verify that it was work on extending what must originally have been very small rooms. Kelvin and I were by chance there this afternoon as the 2 lines of foundations were uncovered.)



Maintenance of the hall was by working bees of men who kept the weather board exterior painted. There are photos of this in process, including one of the roof feature being painted. The working bees have always been a vital part of maintenance, with one a few years ago completing fresh painting of window surrounds doors and other wooden features.



A major change to the hall was in, I think, the mid 1960s, when the stage was moved to the street end of the building, and the space between the hall and the older building was filled with a large kitchen, a crèche room and another “classroom”. Whether this addition included additional toilet facilities I don’t recall.

About the same time changes in thinking about how to do Sunday School, probably with more emphasis on activities, led to four of the small side rooms being opened into 2 larger ones, and new tables being built for the rooms. The last 2 of these were there until very recently.

In the early 1980s there was a major upgrade project on buildings, which included the arrival of the office block with its kitchen and toilet block, the removal of the full stage and the creation of a large storage space (too large?) where it had been and the demolition of the old Sunday School block. More adequate heating was installed in the hall, and as part of the interior decorating, Judy Agar and her friend Maggie Smith painted the red and blue decorative lines round the hall. Nobody was allowed to see this in progress!! The outside of the hall was coated in a rough stucco, to match the office block and reduce maintenance needs.

Several years ago it was decided not to do more than essential maintenance on the hall, given its age and the declining need for such a building. Despite many efforts to deal with leaking roof issues, buckets became essential equipment in heavy rain.

Major users of the hall over the years were Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade, indoor bowls, evening and morning badminton groups, Scottish country dancing, Sunday School and Bible Class socials and dances, all night Telethon activities; Parish events such as the Lord of the Manor formal dinner, celebrations honouring ministers, funeral refreshments, the wedding breakfast for minister Clive Pearson and Mary, craft displays, plant sales, a polling booth and garage sales.

Amongst more recent renters have been an after school programme run by the University, exercise sessions, an after school tutoring class and significantly New Hope Church, who have now been using the hall and other facilities for 20 years or more.

What I have written is totally from memory and may be lacking in accuracy. Memories of people have been very much with me, from all periods of my life at St Ninian's. We have reason to give thanks, as we farewell the old hall, for those who have been involved in its use and maintenance for more than a century.

-Barbara Chapman

*(Mostly written 6 June 2025; updated 10 June with demolition started.)*



## **Deaths:**

We give thanks for the life and ministry of Reverend Sheena Elizabeth Dickson, who died suddenly on 7<sup>th</sup> May at the age of 70.

Sheena Dickson came to Christchurch after ministry in the United Reform Church in the U.K. She was a graduate of Oxford University. Sheena commenced ministry at the St George's Iona parish in early 2007 and saw the parish through some difficult and trying times.

Sheena had a passion for the underdog and had a huge sense of social justice. She was a founding member of Ecu-Action Canterbury, a group dedicated to social justice.

After the earthquake when the St George's church buildings were "munted" and much of East Christchurch was badly affected Sheena continued to offer ministry to those inside and outside the church. Presbyterians have not found it easy to minister in socially deprived sections of society but it was a cause close to Sheena's heart.

In recent times Sheena's mobility was severely impacted by her progressing rheumatoid arthritis. In early May she contracted pneumonia and admission to hospital was unable to reverse that.

Sheena's funeral was held at Knox Church, Bealey Avenue. People may remember visiting and supporting the Swap Shop that Sheena organised.

## Organ Fund:

Please remember our Organ.

Our beloved organ needs a significant refurbishment costing nearly \$20,000. To celebrate the centenary of the church building we are seeking donations to finance this work. Please send your donation to St Ninian's, mentioning Organ in the code part of the payment and help us to complete this work. We are very grateful for all donations that have been received. The donation from the Margret Wallace Estate has been added into the fund in acknowledgement of her many years as our organist.

**To contribute to the organ maintenance fund please use the following information:**

St Ninian's Presbyterian Church 03-0855-0371202-01

*-Kelvin Chapman*

## From our intrepid Explorers:

Rev Chris Elliot and Barbara Horne met up while in Britain!



*Pictured: Women of World War 1 Memorial*



Got an article or image you'd like to see in the next magazine?  
Get in touch with the office.



**Interim Moderator:** Rev Stephanie Wells

**Parish Clerk:** Pam McKeachie

**Organists:** Glenys Graham

Lois Dalton

**Office Staff:** Meredith Wilson

**Office hours:** Thursdays 9am-12pm,

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**St Ninian's Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand**

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**St Ninian's is a Christian community focused on justice,  
compassion and inclusiveness, and the exploration of a  
spirituality relevant to the contemporary world.**