



**“We aim to be a reflection of God to the community”**

Bi-monthly Newsletter of The Alexandria, Clyde Lauder Union Parish ~ June/July 2023

## MINISTERS' MUSINGS

Recently Southern Presbytery commissioned a review of itself, and many of the realities of the decline our parishes are facing were named. And several of the failings or the areas in which we could do better organisationally were identified. The Rev Dr Malcolm Gordon, who is the associate minister at First Church of Otago, penned the following by way of introduction to the review. I share it as we too reflect on our future as a parish in an increasingly secular world, where shortages of human resources and finances become an increasing challenge. Simply doing the old ways better won't help us. Rather a new imagination is needed: rooted in the God of the resurrection.

**Rev Andrew Howley**

**The Rev Dr Malcolm Gordon**

### A Reflection: Grief and Hope

*‘Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’ Jesus to Peter - John 21:18*

Sifting through the many responses as part of this review, I sensed frustration and dissatisfaction. I sensed a little hope and also despair. But behind all these feelings; I sensed grief. I suggest this is the story behind the story. It is the reason for this review. It is the ongoing and inescapable reality

of our church's decline.

Cont.....

#### In This Issue

- Minister's Musings
- In Memoriam
- Newest Saint of the Parish
- Clyde working group
- Past & Upcoming events
- Treasurers Report
- Meetings and Groups
- Pink Ribbon Luncheon
- Worship Services &



Above: Pink Ribbon Luncheon

Below: A treasured stained glass window @ St Mungo's



Above: Our newest Saint of the Parish Ruth McNamara



No doubt, there will be some murmurs of protest; that not all our parishes are struggling, that there are signs of life and reasons to hope. Praise God. Nothing would make me happier than to be wrong. But I fear I am not wrong. Our good news stories are now parishes that are holding their own, rather than breaking new ground, while our dominant narrative is of an inexorable slippage towards a potential terminal failure.

Where, in the last decades we have seen struggling congregations amalgamate, we are now seeing them simply close. We are not only short on people, but imagination. A decade ago, it seemed a certain kind of theology might protect us from decline, a certain way of doing church. It doesn't seem like that anymore.

There is grief in all of this. A grief that this review touches on, without giving it a name.

Perhaps the root of our frustration is this: we may not be able to be what we once were. The inadequacies that we face in our local parishes may not be able to be resolved by Presbytery or Synod, because those same inadequacies are mirrored there. No one is immune to this.

We are being taken by the hand and led somewhere we do not want to go. My lifetime in the church has been a lifetime of seeing the church empty out.

Like others, I have looked for reasons to explain it: secularism, consumerism, individualism, the death of Christendom, the church's failure to speak the language of its context, services too long, sermons too boring, music too foreign. I no longer try and understand, because it does not seem like a reality that I can change. I have seen, and I have participated in, creative, prayerful attempts to re-engage with our world. At times, the decline has been stalled, or even momentarily reversed. But eventually, normal transmission resumes. It is happening whether I want it to or not.

We are being taken by the hand and led somewhere we do not want to go.

This decline is not happening because of our failure, or our lack of faith. I say this, not because we have not failed, or lacked faith, but because we haven't failed or lacked faith any more than usual. Assuming we are responsible might claim too big a role for ourselves in this story.

No doubt there are things we can change, situations we can make better with the way we organise ourselves. And this review is seeking to aid in that work. There are real improvements that are within our grasp. But unless we unmask this grief that sits below the surface, we will only be tying millstones around each other's necks, burdens of unreachable expectation that we can get back to what we had if we only do this or try that.

We need to bury that dream. We need to stand with Jesus by the tomb of Lazarus and weep, not simply rush past our despair in the wild belief that everything is going to be alright. Ahh, but Jesus does raise Lazarus, we respond with relief. It is going to be alright.

And yet, Lazarus still dies. And Jesus stops and weeps because things are not alright.

Cont....

Ask Lazarus if it was alright for him as he struggled against his sickness until he died!

Ask his sisters, who begged Jesus to come and heal him before it was too late, if it was 'alright.' Even the risen Christ still bears the scars of the cross. This may not be the end of our story, but we are still dying. And dying is awful. This situation calls for our grief, as well as our hope. For it was Jesus' grief, not his miraculous raising of Lazarus that caused those standing nearby to say,

*"see how deeply he must have loved him" (John 11:36).*

Grief is part of our witness. Without the grief, our hope becomes detached and unreal. Coupled with grief, our hope takes seriously the pain of our experience, and it takes seriously the promises of God: that this is not the end. But it is still an end. Resurrection is not resuscitation. What new thing comes after this will not simply be a reprise of what has been before. We may be witnessing the end of the institutional form that the Presbyterian movement has taken in Aotearoa for the last 175 years. I suggest the task ahead of us is not to try and reverse this decline: not to try and reclaim the high ground of society's spiritual imagination, not to become important and influential once more. We have been pushed to the edges. We are on the brink. The task ahead of us must be: how do we embody the gospel here. What gift has God graced us to make to the world, even from this hard place?

We may not be able to sail into these headwinds, but we can surely tack across them. We can accept and embrace the reality of decline, grieve for what we have lost and left behind, and then meet this reality with imagination, liberated from what we have to be by a faithful reckoning with who we are, and more importantly, whose we are. This God of ours is no stranger to working with bereft people, outnumbered and overwhelmed. We are being led somewhere we do not want to go, but friends, we are being led. As we consider our way forward from here, may we no longer dig in our heels, but find the courage to follow. Prayerfully, let's grieve what is lost and make space for what is to come.



**By Rev Dr Malcolm Gordon Lent 2023 on behalf of the Southern Presbytery Review Team 2022-23.**

**Our thoughts and prayers to the families and friends of...**

**Noel Alexander Joyce - 17th April 2023 - St Enoch's Church  
Alexandra**



**Joyce Donnelly Jackson - 19th April 2023 - Alexandra Cemetery**



## **OUR LATEST SAINT OF THE PARISH - Ruth McNamara**

No matter where Ruth has been she voluntarily gives of her time and efforts for the benefit of those around her. Through her many activities, the communities in which she lives are the better for it.

When her family lived in Lauder, Ruth was involved with the local school fighting to keep it open. As a member of the Lauder Presbyterian Parish, she was Superintendent of the Becks Church Sunday School, member of the Lauder Board of Managers, and organiser of the annual Christmas carol singing to the local elderly. While still living at Lauder, she would travel to Alexandra almost daily with her involvement in the Church and Waste Busters.

When the Lauder Parish became a part of the Alexandra/Clyde/Lauder Union Parish, Ruth became a Parish Councillor, convenor of the Social Action committee, organising social events for the parish and was a parish representative to conferences. Since 1999 she's been an important member of our L/C Worship team, helping take services at Ophir, Clyde, and Alexandra and latterly, at Castlewood and Ranui Rest Homes. She is a parish visitor, keeping in touch with her area through visits and delivery of the ACLaim. Recently she has also printed and delivered personally, the sermons from our weekly services to those unable to attend services. She assembles and distributes the weekly free will offering envelopes for the parish and is on various rosters for door duty, serving communion and morning teas for special events.

These are just some of the tasks Ruth undertakes and there are probably more, but did you know, she prints your weekly newsletter and makes sure there are activities for the children each week?

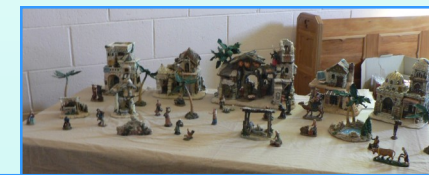
She is very caring and aware of others needs and will often visit, usually with a meal, those in times of stress or sadness.

Ruth has wholeheartedly given of herself to individuals and organisations. She is willing to go the 'extra mile' and through her thoughtful and caring acts has made a difference to her community.

We will miss you Ruth, not just for all you do for our Parish, but we will miss YOU, a true and loyal friend to us all.

**Linda Armstrong**

From left **Ruth** in the Combined churches pantry @ St Enoch's, her nativity diorama, having fun @ The Cryptic dinner and as Alice in Wonderland @ ACLUP Annual Fair.



## REPORT FROM CHAIR of

### Clyde Working Group's first meeting 7 06 2023

Seven members attended the meeting providing a good start and the opportunity to get to know each other and briefly share our thoughts and ideas.

Good news, Erin Pendreigh has confirmed her availability for Sunday 2 July at 2:00pm. We have locked in a booking at the Clyde Memorial Hall Super Room, 9 Fraser Street, Clyde (where the Clyde Congregation now meets on Sundays).

#### **Overview of meeting content:**

1. - Opened with Romans 12 reading and prayer.
2. - Brief welcome and acknowledgement of the combined skills and experience that will contribute to a positive group dynamic. Looking forward to fostering a culture of respect and trust.
3. - Overview of the role and tasks ahead. Acknowledgement of the Parish Councils approach and reasoning to arriving at the final closure of the building,
4. - Touched on Synod property requirements and criteria with regard to building renovation, demolition etc.
5. - Following reasonable discussion regarding the pros, cons and content of congregation/parish meetings it was decided the most beneficial place to start was with a representative from Synod/Presbytery to address the first meeting.

The brief and purpose will be for all to obtain a broad understanding of Synod's criteria, funding requirements and the parameters we will need to work with within the various options explored.

Such options may include the potential of renovation, building new, developer joint venture, full or partial sale of the land and income generating business ventures.

I think this covers the important points and if anybody has anything further to include for discussion at our first congregational meeting please let me know.

*Peter Griffioen*



**From my "GOOD NEWS BIBLE- " Growing as a Christian – Whatever happens you need to grow as a Christian. Here are some tips for becoming a stronger Christian.**

**1 Attend church worship regularly.** *The church is not a building, but a large family of people. Grow in understanding as you are taught. (see Hebrews 10:24-25)*

**2 Live for others as well as yourself.** *The more you help other people whether as an individual, through your church or in a community organisation, the more you will enjoy living as a Christian. (see Ephesians 2: 10)*

**3 Learn to depend on Jesus.** *He has given us his own special gift-The Holy Spirit-who strengthens us in tough times, reminds us of Jesus' words, helps us to pray, gives us power to do what God wants, and helps us grow to be more like Jesus (see John 14: 26) More in next issue. Gay Gordon*

# Past & Upcoming Events



## ♪ SOUP GLORIOUS SOUP ♪ & BUNS

**ACLUP SOUP SUNDAY** Will be held from Sunday June 25th Come along and join in fun, food and fellowship after Church in St Enoch's Lounge. Soup and buns provided. Bring your friends and family. Everyone welcome.



**Treasurers Report:-** We are now into the last month of the Parish's financial year and whilst the figures below look promising overall there will be an expected loss for the year.

We have been fortunate that our minister's employment was reduced from full time to .8 for the last 3 years and he has taken some of his leave without pay.

We have received notice that insurances are likely to increase by at least 25%. This has always been a huge burden on our finances. Fortunately, we have been able to select the level of cover we can have on our properties which was unavailable in the past. We could only insure for 'replacement', hence the congregational meetings being held on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully, with your approval of a lower insurance cover, our premiums may be lower as well!

<u>Income</u>	<u>April - May Expenses</u>	<u>Credit</u>
22767.84	19176.35	3591.49

May I remind you to please consider claiming the I.R.D. rebate for donations and giving it to our Parish. It's an easy way of increasing your giving.  
**N.B: Non-wage earners can apply for this rebate.** *For help with your claim, please contact* → **Don Melville, 448 9233**  
**or Linda Armstrong, 9767 528**

## A Prayer for When Grief Makes Praying Hard

"Jesus, my pain is so deep. My anger is fierce, my fear is crippling. And then in the midst of all of these emotions, numbness sets in. I struggle to know how to pray or where to begin! So I'm going to remind myself of truth. I know you are here with me in my grief. I know you are mending the brokenness in ways I can't always see. Lord, hold me in your arms, take this pain and help me bear it. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen." (by [Kimberly Carroll](#)) Google

## REGULAR MEETINGS AND GROUPS

### Weekly

<b>House Study Group</b>	Tuesdays 10am—11.00am All Welcome	3A Mayfair Grove Alexandra
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### Monthly

<b>Afternoon Fellowship</b>	4th Thursday of the month 1.30pm <b>Contact: Various</b>	June Sinclair <b>448 8281</b>
<b>St Mungo's Fellowship</b>	3rd Wednesday of the month 2.00pm <b>Contact: Sheryll Hanning</b>	Various <b>449 2703</b>
<b>Parish Council</b>	3rd Wednesday of the month <b>Contact: Kathy Milligan</b>	St Enoch's 4.30pm <b>021 0261 5866</b>

### THE PINK RIBBON LUNCHEON

Thank-you to the local radio stations, the retailers who agreed to display the posters, Community House for agreeing to sell tickets.

Sheryll, Ruth, Kathy, Linda need to be mentioned along with the ACLUP for use of Kitchen and St Enoch's lounge. Also to Kay for her generosity in supplying most of the food.

The lunch included:- pumpkin and tomato soups, garlic bread rolls and ciabata breads; pasta seafood salad, quiche, green salad, croissants with ham cheese and tomato. Dessert: pink lamingtons & Belgium slice.

A fun time was had by all a big thanks to those who attended and to those who purchased tickets as a donation to this wonderful cause.



**EDITORS NOTE:** The next ACLaim will be June/July please have any articles to me by **Monday 17th July 2023.** *Gay Gordon.*

#### Your Pastoral Visitor Message:

### Upcoming Worship Services 2023

<b>June 18th</b>	Clyde	9.00am	*
<b>Pentecost 3</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	
<b>June 21st</b>	<b>Castlewood</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	
	<b>Ranui</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	
<b>June 25th</b>	Clyde	9.00am	*
<b>Pentecost 4</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	
<b>July 2nd</b>	Clyde	9.00am	<b>Communion</b>
<b>Pentecost 5</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	<b>Communion</b>
<b>July 9th</b>	Clyde	9.00am	*
<b>Pentecost 6</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	
<b>July 16th</b>	Clyde	9.00am	*
<b>Pentecost 7</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	
<b>July 19th</b>	<b>Castlewood</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	
	<b>Ranui</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	
<b>July 23rd</b>	Clyde	9.00am	*
<b>Pentecost 8</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	
<b>July 30th</b>	Alexandra	To be confirmed	<b>Combined Service @ St Aidans</b>
<b>Pentecost 9</b>			
<b>Aug 6th</b>	Clyde	9.00am	<b>Communion</b> *
<b>Pentecost 10</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	<b>Communion</b>
<b>Aug 13th</b>	Clyde	9.00am	*
<b>Pentecost 11</b>	Alexandra	10.30am	

\* Please note: St Mungo's services will be held in Clyde hall Super Room at 9.00am. Any change will be notified.

### Contact Us

**Minister:**  
Rev. Andrew Howley

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021 518 053

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Kathy Milligan

Phone: 021 0261 5866

Email:  
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Visit us on the web at  
[www.alexchurch.org.nz](http://www.alexchurch.org.nz)

Like us on FaceBook

[Facebook.com/alexchurch](https://www.facebook.com/alexchurch)

### Worship Times

#### Sunday:

Clyde: 9.00am

Alexandra: 10.30am



**If you require transportation to church please ask!**

Telephone Jennifer Bowie: 448 7369

Sue & Don Melville  
448 9233