

Lent 2026

# SEASONS OF GRACE

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
OF THE ALEXANDRA CLYDE LAUDER UNION PARISH



**Alexandra Clyde Lauder**  
UNION PARISH

# Cover Story

## The day after Valentine's Day

On Sunday the 15th of February, 2026, the day after Valentine's Day, we had a special worship service celebrating the gift of marriage, relationships and love. We invited people who had been married in the parish's worship centres. Others came. There was a marvellous turnout, including of a couple who travelled down from Timaru. The church was bedecked with ribbons and flowers. We took up the theme of relationships as "entwining" people who bring different perspectives, backgrounds, values and more. We praised the God who nourished relationships. We lit candles as prayers for those who came to mind as we reflected on the theme. Annette Meyer contributed wedding music. Our children wondered about photos they were shown of a wedding 40 years ago. In a context where our polarising society is straining relationships and toxic masculinity is too evident, we committed to working with others for respectful relationships where everyone is valued and cherished. The Timaru couple cut the specially baked wedding cake. We enjoyed conversations at the special high tea. It was a great occasion in which we sought to honour people involved in all kinds of relationships. A very big thank you to the many who contributed to the day. We will do it again one day taking up the suggestions people made for the next such occasion.

Like wine at Cana, joy overflowed.



**Alexandra Clyde Lauder**  
UNION PARISH

**MISSION**

**To follow Jesus, joining with people in responding to God's Spirit in our communities.**

**VISION**

**A vibrant faith community where generations and cultures grow together, constantly being renewed and engaging our district.**



**Alexandra Clyde Lauder**  
UNION PARISH

**SIGNPOSTS**

Engage district

Speak out

Lead effectively

Renew worship

Focus physical and financial resource

# Editorial

## Behold a new thing is arising

Welcome to our first edition of “Seasons of Grace” this is our new quarterly publication to share stories of faith and hope, joy and love as we journey with our alongside us God in Central Otago. It will share not only news of the parish but also resourcing for your faith journey, and inspiration and your stories of life and faith. We hope you will share this publication with others.

We welcome your contributions: be they stories, reflections, photos, poetry, drawings.



The church year is quickly moving from the Advent journey to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ, to the Lenten journey as we follow Christ and his crucifixion and resurrection.

Lent begins in the ache, the questions, the tension between love and loss. It does not rush toward resolution, but invites us to slow down, to turn with honesty, and to journey with Jesus through wildness, confrontation, and cross. Along the way, we listen for voices from the margins, learn from stories of resistance and renewal, and remember that God meets us not in strength, but in surrender. This is the work of imagination: to envision a world remade by mercy, to trust that healing is possible even in the shadow of empire, and to practice love that outlasts despair. Lent calls us into this holy labour—not as a solitary act, but as a communal path toward transformation.

Join us this Lent as we walk with Christ toward the pain of the world—not to be undone by it, but to be transformed. To imagine a different way. To sow seeds of justice. To rise, together, with holy courage and sacred hope.

## We are people on a journey

Alexandra Clyde Lauder Union Parish seeks to follow Jesus, joining with people in responding to God’s Spirit in our communities. Our vision for the next five years is to be known as a vibrant faith community where generations and cultures grow together, constantly being renewed and engaging our district.

The Parish Council has adopted this mission and vision to guide our life as a community.

Key signposts on this journey are to engage the district, renew worship, speak out on topics of importance, and lead effectively, with focussing of resources toward our goals. Signposts are aligned with Parish Council portfolios allocated to each member.

You may have already attended Christmas or Easter worship events in Omakau, participated in new styles of Sunday worship, and enjoyed enlightening discussion with worshippers of different ages.

This new-style magazine will continue to let you know about future activities and provide information about important topics.

Your Parish Councillors are Rev Andrew Howley, Don Melville, Sue Melville, Linda Armstrong, Chris Bielby, Steve Battrick, Peter Griffioen, Simon Checketts, and Mavis Duncanson.

We welcome your feedback and ideas as we grow together into an even more vibrant faith community.

# Election year pondering

*It's election year. Democracy relies on people contributing views in the marketplace of ideas.*

*Contributing ideas from a Christian perspective is a way we can help our country move towards God's vision called the kingdom of heaven or the reign of God. One strand of our congregation's new five-year plan is speaking out. It is a part of what it means to follow Jesus. The living Christ influences how followers vote, the values we promote and the questions we ask. It is a way we seek to participate in the reign of God. This article aims to help us shape questions of political aspirants.*

## **It concerns tax.**

Tax figures prominently in the story of Jesus' birth. Luke 2 in the Authorised Version states – "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city." Tax is named at the start of talk of Jesus. No wonder it has become an issue Christians discuss.

World church bodies like the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council have been promoting tax justice through The Zacchaeus Tax Campaign. It calls for a global tax and economic system that acts like Zacchaeus, the tax collector in the New Testament.

They have produced a toolkit: Zac Tax Toolkit\*. They state: "a fair tax policy – in today's predominantly capitalist societies – is not only a very effective leverage to fight or reduce poverty, inequality and ecological destruction. Social and ecological tax justice is also indispensable for the functioning of democracy at the national level, and for the equal and peaceful coexistence of the international community at the regional and global level. ... tax injustice is one major part of the compelling story about why poverty persists in a world of plenty."

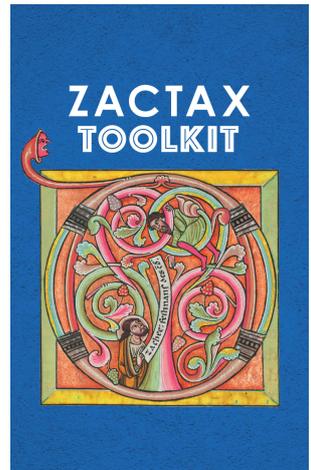
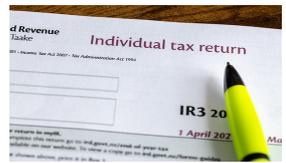
The statement from the church bodies calls for steps to be taken. The first is: "We call for the enactment of progressive wealth taxes at global and national levels to curb the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of an increasingly powerful few, hand-in-hand with increased public spending to stamp out poverty." Another is: "We urgently call for progressive carbon and pollution taxes at different levels to protect our only planetary home."

In 2004, I participated in a world church meeting about such issues in Accra in Ghana. I suggested that perhaps a way forward was to engage world bodies that had views different from our own. I had in mind talking with people like Mike Moore, New Zealander, who had been Director General of the World Trade Organization. The suggestion was supported by wealthy countries of the North. Churches of the South strongly opposed the suggestion, speaking from their painful experience of disempowering poverty in a deeply unequal world. It challenged me to reflect on what I could do as a brother in Christ, in solidarity. Perhaps a question is – How do our aspiring representatives envisage a tax system that reduces inequality and enables climate justice?

\*<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/zactax-toolkit>

Kerry Enright

*After 43 years of diverse ministry, Kerry Enright recently retired to Alexandra. Ministry included service in Presbyterian and Union congregations, ten years as the Presbyterian Church's Assembly Executive Secretary and seven years leading the Uniting Church in Australia's international agency UnitingWorld. The Uniting Church has a strong commitment to justice including tax justice. Alongside Pacific churches, UnitingWorld advocated for just trade policies as Australia and New Zealand put pressure on Pacific nations to adopt neo-liberal approaches. Kerry's theological study and international involvement, including in Accra, strengthened his belief that the gospel offers a way of living that values creation and benefits all people rather than only people who are privileged. It is that belief that leads him to advocate for economic policies, including in relation to tax, that enable the flourishing of which Jesus speaks.*



# Seven Spiritual Practices

The following spiritual practices are derived from Ignatian Spirituality.

Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality for everyday life. It insists that God is present in our world and active in our lives. It is a pathway to deeper prayer, good decisions guided by keen discernment, and an active life of service to others.

1. **Do a short, focused morning prayer.** This can be, “Good morning, Lord. I’m grateful to be alive another day,” or, “May my thoughts, words, and actions reflect your love today,” or anything else that is short and to the point. It can be a waking-up prayer, to help you focus your attention as the day begins.
2. **Sigh to God.** The Holy Spirit takes every sigh, every tear, every groan and translates them to our heavenly Father. Sometimes we put too high a value on words when it comes to prayer. Sometimes, a sigh will convey exactly how you’re feeling and what you need. Please note: you are encouraged to do this prayer multiple times a day.
3. **Reflect.** Stop at mid-morning or noon or afternoon or evening, and **look back at what has happened in the day so far**. What did you do or say? How did you feel? Where did you perceive God present or at work? Respond with thanksgiving or with a prayer to do better during the rest of the day.
4. **Listen to Scripture.** Allow Scripture to soak into your mind and heart by listening to it—in recorded songs or hymns or from an audio version of the Bible. Take just five or ten minutes to do this, while you’re commuting or eating your lunch.
5. **Say thanks.** Pause to thank God for one thing in your day. Or thank another person for one thing he or she has said or done that helped you.
6. **Say please.** Acknowledge your true desire at this moment and voice it to God. Or ask another person for help rather than trying to do everything yourself.
7. **Help someone.** Donate money to an organisation that addresses needs in the community. Encourage a coworker. Help a stranger pick up the dropped bag of groceries. Hold a door open. Pitch in when you see a friend or family member overwhelmed with a task.

St. Ignatius Loyola was born in 1491, one of 13 children of a family of minor nobility in northern Spain. As a young man Ignatius Loyola was inflamed by the ideals of courtly love and knighthood and dreamed of doing great deeds.

But in 1521 Ignatius was gravely wounded in a battle with the French. While recuperating, Ignatius Loyola experienced a conversion. Reading the lives of Jesus and the saints made Ignatius happy and aroused desires to do great things. Ignatius realised that these feelings were clues to God’s direction for him.

Over the years, Ignatius became expert in the art of spiritual direction. He collected his insights, prayers, and suggestions in his book the *Spiritual Exercises*, one of the most influential books on the spiritual life ever written. With a small group of friends, Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. Ignatius conceived the Jesuits as “contemplatives in action.”



# MODERATOR'S 2026 LENT MESSAGE

## *40 days & 40 nights*

For the first third of my 36 years in parish ministry 'I didn't do Lent'. I had my preaching plan; I didn't use the lectionary either. I always took into account that Easter was a significant weekend with Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. But looking back, Easter stood on its own as it were from the flow and context of the Scriptural narrative in my preaching plans.

When you read the articles and commentaries on the origin of Lent, two things stand out. The first is the 40-day period of Lent. Moses and Elijah went onto the mountains to fast and pray for 40 days, both receiving "the word of the Lord". Then there was Jesus, who was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for 40 days and nights to be tempted by Satan. He fasted and prayed. The climax of that account is Satan receiving "the word of the Lord". In my spiritual journey, without any claim of receiving a revelation that changed history, I spent 40 days and 40 nights in the wilds of Fiordland on a solo retreat. Yes, it was life-changing, and the experiences of the Lord are in my soul until this day.

The second aspect that catches my attention is the fasting aspect, not as an act of repentance or anything like that, but an expression of devotion to no one else or anything else like church tradition, but to be centred on Jesus, his devotion to humankind through his crucifixion for the sins of the world on the cross, and his uplifting of those who believe in him through his resurrection.

What to fast with is an interesting question. Have you noticed how Protestants tend to be rather shallow or flippant on this topic? Give up coffee. Give up McDonalds. Good for the health maybe but do those things actually draw you closer to a deeper spiritual understanding of the person of Jesus as he set his path towards the cross. Now that I am much more experienced in ministry, Lent is now a deliberate journey with the faith community I am in looking for inner transformation of mind and soul. Past the intellectual, past academic answers, into the trials and pain of life to find The Healer.

One of the things I discovered in my Fiordland 40-day retreat was that I stepped away from the distractions of life where the static of the world stopped in my mind and I found the thin place where heaven and earth meet. It actually exists. It is difficult to take a group of people to a place like this, but worth trying through creative interaction in Lenten activities.

Lent is a journey of returning to God. We are prodigals. Prayer, solitude and acts of compassion are the cobblestones of the path we take at Lent. You can discover who you are in Christ and your own humanity as a result. *"Dear Lord, be with me today. I don't always know the way. I don't know the words at times. Show me the way"*.

*Peter*

Right Rev Peter Dunn  
Moderator Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand  
moderator@presbyterian.org.nz

 Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

# Still Asking. Still Becoming.

## **Methodist Church of New Zealand Vice President Rev Peter Norman – Feb 3, 2026**

What does it mean to be Methodist in Aotearoa now? Te Hāhi Weteriana is being reshaped by God's aroha – through covenant, whenua, and relational accountability. As Church we are not vanishing but being re-woven.

What if we are not witnessing the decline of a Connexion, but the necessary re-weaving of a covenant people?

In reflecting on the transformation of Te Hahi Weteriana I draw on the direction of Conference 2025 as well as a paper written by the late Donald Phillipps – first delivered in 2003 and revised in 2010 – titled The Ethos of New Zealand Methodism – A Personal View.

It was written well before many of our current structural expressions had taken clearer form – before covenant language became as constitutionally embedded as it now is, before climate displacement was spoken of as a core identity marker, before rangatahi were explicitly centred in governance. It was also written before Te Hāpai Ō Ki Muri was established and before the restorative revision of Section 8 reshaped our disciplinary framework – developments that now significantly shape how we hold authority and accountability together.

And yet, reading it now, it feels surprisingly fresh. Phillipps begins simply. "Ethos," he says, is the prevailing spirit of a people.

Not a mission statement. Not a strategy. But the tone you can feel when you step into the life of a church – what holds when programmes change and buildings age.

He reminds us that Methodism in Aotearoa has long understood itself through three interwoven realities: we are Church, we are Connexion, and we are Conference. Church – sacramental, ordered, accountable.

Connexion – bound together in responsible mutuality, not congregational isolation.

Conference – sometimes messy, often tiring, but deeply important: the gathered place where authority is exercised through shared discernment.

But Phillipps does not end with structural confidence. He ends with questions:

What is God saying to us now? What more can be done to promote the work of God?

At the heart of Methodist ethos lies not a fixed answer, but a living question.

Scripture knows this posture. Again, and again the people of God are called to listen: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches." The Church is never static. The Spirit leads – sometimes into wilderness, sometimes across thresholds, sometimes into forms not previously imagined.

That is the ground we stand on.

The Ground and the Whenua We Belong To In Aotearoa, however, that ground is not abstract.

Ethos here grows out of whenua. We are not a Connexion floating above context, nor merely standing on land as if it were a platform beneath us. We belong within it. The land shapes our theology whether we acknowledge it or not. The soil holds stories older than our institutions. The coastlines carry memory longer than our minutes of Conference.

Whenua carries covenant. It bears the scars of colonisation and the resilience of those who remain. If we speak of Methodist identity in this place, then we must speak of land – not as scenery, but as relationship.

The earth is the Lord's, the psalmist reminds us. Creation groans, Paul writes, awaiting redemption. If covenant shapes our life together, then it must shape how we live within this land and alongside those whose homes are threatened by rising seas. Climate justice is no longer peripheral. If we belong to this whenua, then the wellbeing of rivers, forests, coastlines, and communities across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa is part of our discipleship. Rising seas do not only threaten geography; they threaten whakapapa, language, belonging.

Conference recognised this. The adoption of a Climate-Induced Displacement Policy and strengthened sanctuary commitments signal that covenant now stretches across oceans. Theology has met geography.

### **A Church Already Moving**

It would be easy to speak only of strain and uncertainty. But that would miss the deeper story. Significant advances have already been made.

Conference 2025 gathered under the theme God's Aroha – A Call to Sacred Transformation. That framing mattered. It reminded us that transformation is not driven by anxiety or institutional survival, but by divine love. Aroha is not sentiment; it is covenantal commitment. It is justice made tangible. It is relationship sustained in action.

It echoes the love described in 1 John – love not merely in word or speech, but in truth and action. Sacred transformation is not cosmetic adjustment; it is grace embodied.

Importantly, many of these shifts were already underway. Conference did not invent them from scratch; it recognised and deepened a movement already in motion.

# God's Aroha and the Re-Weaving of Te Hāhi

The revision of Section 8 toward a restorative justice framework marked a profound shift in how we understand discipline — restoration over punishment, relationship over retribution. That is not cosmetic reform. It is theological realignment. It reflects the grace that seeks reconciliation rather than exclusion.

The establishment of Te Hāpai Ō Ki Muri marked another step in this unfolding journey — modelling governance grounded in shared authority and Treaty partnership. Connexion here is not merely structural alignment; it is shared discernment in the Spirit.

The articulation of Ngā Whare e Rua has helped us name how authority is held in this land. Within Te Whare Tauwiwi, the four waka/vaka journey together as a collective navigation rather than a loose collection of parts. We are not managing departments; we are voyaging together. Authority is being reframed as relational, horizon-focused, attentive to context —

## **Wayfinding leadership in practice.**

In the plenaries, rangatahi did not whisper. They spoke with clarity and courage, calling the Church beyond symbolic inclusion toward shared power. Relationship — tika, pono, covenant — was not decorative language. It was named as the heart of who we are.

That same relational lens turned outward. Climate displacement across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa was confronted as lived reality. Solidarity was named as responsibility.

Property was reimagined as taonga for mission. Disability inclusion was affirmed as structural transformation, not mere welcome. Governance decisions were approached with honesty and accountability.

This is not a Church standing still.

It is a Church rebalancing itself, shifting from maintenance toward covenant, from hierarchy toward partnership, from control toward shared responsibility.

And yet.

## **The Tension We Must Not Avoid**

We would be naïve to ignore the strain. We affirm the connexional nature of our shared life, but connexional language cannot substitute for relational accountability.

If covenant truly shapes us, then the pace of change matters.

If authority is genuinely shared, then accompaniment matters. If we claim Wesley, then tending souls must matter.

Process and communication are not secondary details. They are ethical acts.

Here is the hinge: We are not struggling because we are becoming more covenantal. We are struggling because we are only partially covenantal. Our constitutional language has strengthened. Our relational practice is still catching up.

Sacred transformation will not allow us to remain halfway.

From Vanishing to Re-Weaving

Some describe a “vanishing connexion.” There is contraction in places. We should not pretend otherwise. However, contraction is not disappearance.

**Scripture offers another image.** The body has many members, yet one Spirit. The vine that is pruned is not discarded; it bears fruit. What appears as loss may be preparation. What if we are not vanishing? What if we are being re-woven?

Re-woven around covenant rather than control.

Re-woven around shared authority rather than inherited hierarchy.

Re-woven around ecological solidarity rather than institutional survival.

Re-woven around relational depth rather than numerical anxiety.

Transformation may look less like expansion and more like deep belonging.

Grace will remain prevenient, justifying, sanctifying — but heard with Aotearoa's accent.

Social holiness will stretch to include ecological healing.

Connexion will mean covenantal accountability.

Transformation is not cosmetic. It is relational. And it is already taking shape — in hapori, in communities rediscovering spiritual and social agency.

A movement does not settle. It listens. It reforms. It risks.

The Spirit who gathered a scattered people at Pentecost is not finished with us. We may be lighter in some institutional ways, but we are heavier in covenant, in justice, in shared responsibility. And in te taiao.

And so we return — not to answers, but to the questions that have always marked a people on the move:

What is God saying to us now? What more can be done to promote the work of God?

# Children in Church

The Alexandra Clyde Lauder Union Parish Council welcomes people of all ages to participate in activities including Sunday morning worship.

We are fortunate to have children who attend most Sundays and enrich our time together. Our time together each week provides a chance for different generations to learn from each other. The activities on these pages are for people of all ages to respond creatively to the stories that we read in church during Lent and Easter.

## WORD TENNIS

In Luke 22:7-46 we read about the last supper. Let's name what it can look like to share a meal with our friends and family by playing a game of Word Tennis with a buddy. Use **meal** as a starting word.

The first person writes a word related to **meal** and the second person writes a word related to the first person's word. For example, **meal, food, sharing**, and so on.

Go back and forth until you can no longer think of words to connect.

At the end, count how many words you came up with together.

X A E T S

V I G E

C R E E A T H

A Y P

E T T S

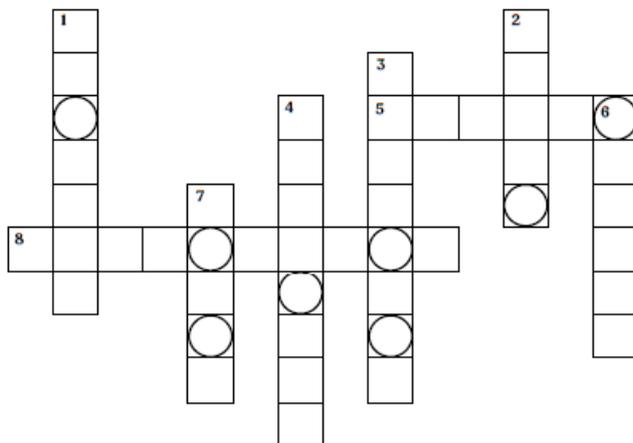
E D I N B E O T

S A A R E C

U S S E J

U T T R H

E S E I H R A P



### DOWN

1. "\_\_\_\_\_ the Lord your God, and serve only God." (v. 10)
2. What did Satan tell Jesus to make from stones? (v. 3)
3. What is another word meaning "really hungry?" (v. 2)
4. Where was Jesus when Satan showed him all the kingdoms? (v. 8)

6. Who led Jesus into the wilderness? (v. 1)

7. What is another name that Satan goes by? (v. 8)

### ACROSS

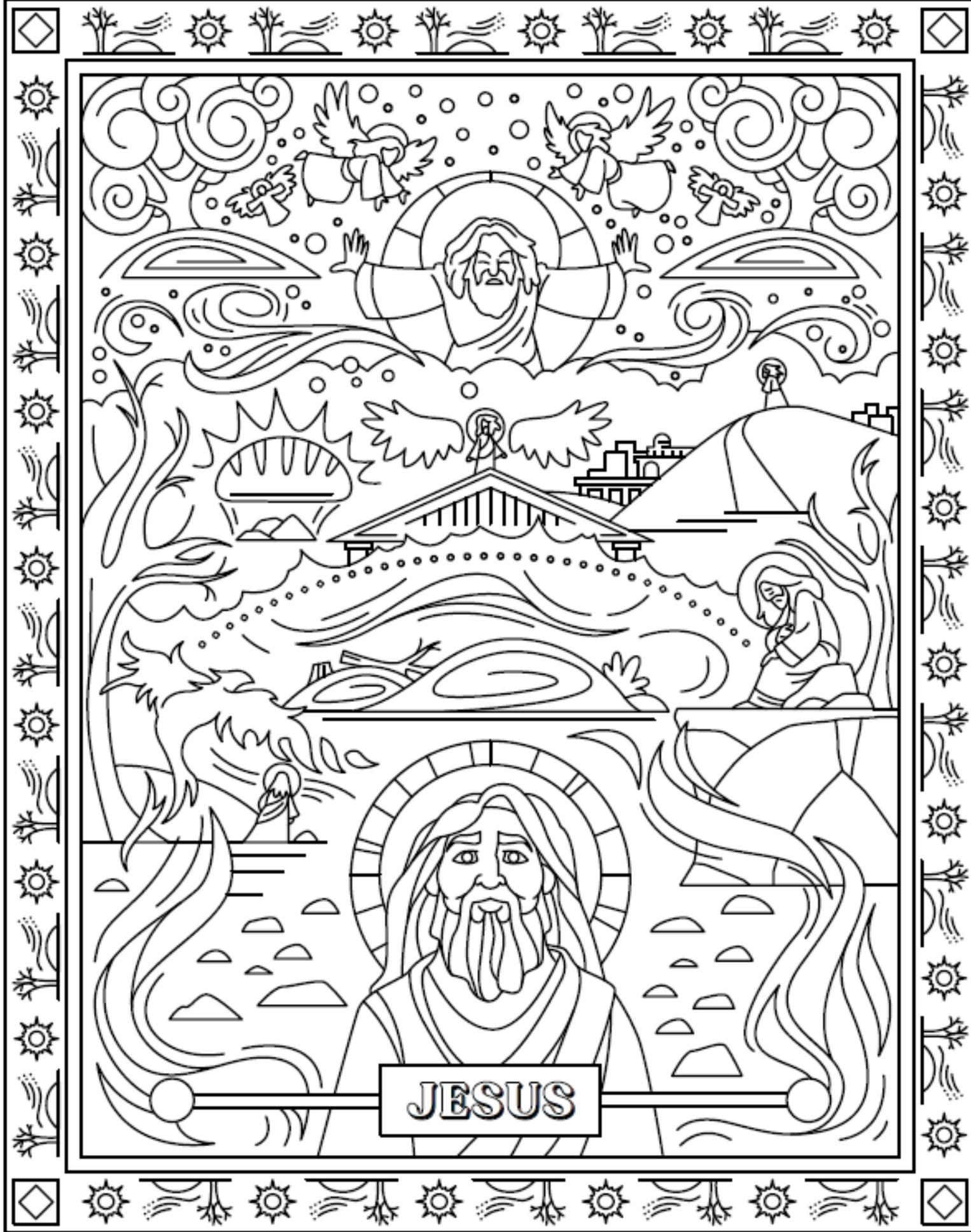
5. Who came to care for Jesus after he was tempted? (v. 11)
8. Where did Jesus spend 40 days and nights? (v. 1)

## WORD UNSRCAMBLE

The story in Mark 12:13-17 tells of Jesus continuing to teach the religious leaders about how we should follow and live lives according to God's ways of love and justice. Unscramble these mixed up words below to reveal parts of the story.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Read the clues to solve the crossword and learn how Jesus responded when he was tempted. If you get stuck, read the story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness found in Matthew 4:1-11



Matthew 4:1-11 • [illustratedministry.com](http://illustratedministry.com)

Colouring In is not just for kids,  
feel free to share photos of your completed work with us online.

Hosted by Alexandra Salvation Army  
Supported by the Combined Churches of Alexandra

# GOOD FRIDAY

A contemplative and interactive

Easter Prayer Walk Through for all ages

*Drop in during the open sessions  
and stay as long as you want*



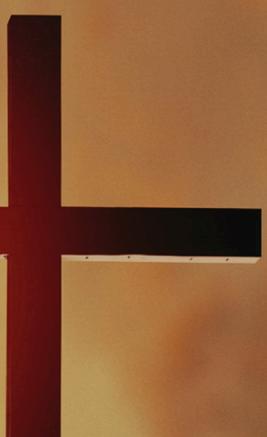
Alexandra Salvation Army  
37 Royal Terrace

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 5pm - 8pm

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 9am - 1pm

The Dunstan Anglican Parish  
& Alexandra Clyde Lauder Union Parish  
invite you to

# Easter Day All Age Worship



1 PM SUNDAY 5TH APRIL 2026  
HAWKDUN ROOM, OMAKAU SCHOOL,  
OMAKAU

## DISCARDED SCARECROW, GIVER OF HOPE

More Info: Kerry Enright 0274675542 or Penny Simamon 0274909198

# Upcoming Worship

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> March	<b>Disruptive Blessings</b> Sermon on the Plain	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Holy Confrontation</b> Jesus and the Canaanite Woman	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Accountable Leadership</b> Jesus the Good Shepherd	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March	<b>True Allegiance</b> Paying Imperial Tax to Caesar	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Sacred Protest</b> Jesus' Triumphal Entry	10am St Aidan's Anglican Church
Maundy Thursday	<b>Risky Mercy</b> Passover and the Garden	6pm St Enoch's Alexandra
Good Friday	<b>Stations of the Cross</b> Contemplative and interactive walkthrough	Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 5pm - 8pm 9am - 1pm Alexandra Salvation Army
Easter Sunday	<b>Dawn Sunrise</b>	Alexandra Lookout, Little Valley Road
Easter Sunday	<b>Fulfilling Imagination</b> Mary's Announcement of the Resurrection	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Easter Sunday	<b>Discarded scarecrow, Giver of hope</b>	1pm Omakau School
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Global Mission - focus on Vanuatu</b> with Rev Phil King	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Emmaus Road</b>	10am St Enoch's Alexandra
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Christ the Good Shepherd</b>	10am St Enoch's Alexandra

## Contact Details

**Minister:** Rev Andrew Howley Phone / TXT: 021 518 053

**Email:** minister@alexchurch.org.nz



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