Pitopito Kōrero o Te Hāhi
Rūtana o Aotearoa

2 April 2020

Tēnā koutou e te whanau a te Karaiti; greetings dear family of Christ.

WE NEED SOME GOOD NEWS

The other evening, we read these words from the Bible for our family devotion …

Luke 4

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Later, on that same evening, the Council of Synod met, and here is the prayer that I prayed after I had shared these words from Luke’s account of the Gospel. You might like to pray it too …

Lord Jesus, it means so much to us that the Spirit of the Living Lord God is upon you. Especially at this time, to know that you – our Lord, our Saviour, our Brother, our Friend – especially at this time of pandemic and anxiety … at this time of illness and death, loss of life and loss of livelihood, these times of fear and uncertainty … especially in these circumstances, to know that the Spirit of the Lord is upon you to proclaim good news to this poor world.

Thank you, Lord God, for anointing your Son, Jesus to bring good news … to be good news for us and for the world.

We pray, Jesus, liberate the world from the captivity of coronavirus. Bring recovery to those who have been affected by it. Free those who are oppressed by its grip.

We pray for Italy and Spain and the USA … for Australia and the UK … for our South Pacific neighbours … for all people of the earth … for leaders of nations and health experts … for our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern … for our Director-General of Health, Ashley Bloomfield … for our doctors and nurses, our police … for those testing people … Lord, we pray for New Zealand … proclaim good news to us and keep us safe in this time of lock-down.

Thank you for the encouraging signs every now and then – if that’s what they are – of declining numbers of new cases. Proclaim your favour to your people, and deliver us from all evil, including the scourge of this virus.

Spirit of the Lord be upon us that we may be people of your good news … speaking hope and love, proclaiming liberty and recovery … the hope and love, the liberty and recovery, that comes only from Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

FROM LCANZ Bishop John Henderson

A few days back, Bishop John sent out another COVID-19 update. I share these words from his update with you …

The Lord’s mercy and peace be with you. Over the last few weeks Lutherans across Australia and New Zealand have been energetic in adapting to changing circumstances.

It is heartening to see all this energy and resourcefulness. Zoom, YouTube, Facebook, email, phone and ‘snail mail’ have all been pressed into the service of the Word. Some congregations are even breaking attendance records! One of the advantages of online platforms is the ability to see how many are participating or have watched or downloaded materials.
I want to affirm this activity – thank you! – and our renewed commitment to continuing worship and pastoral care, keeping the church open in people’s hearts using the means we have available to us at home – from fully online to fully printed via the post, or hybrid arrangements of both. All the while we long to be back together in the same place, and what a day that will be!

NEW WAYS OF CONNECTING

During these days and weeks of lock-down and isolation, the Church is discovering new ways of connecting and being together.

I’m really enjoying the weekly ZOOM (teleconference) that the pastors are having. It’s an opportunity for us to check-in with each other, hear how we’re coping, share ideas and resources.

During our last ZOOM on Tuesday, four pastors shared how they’re providing worship resources, and so I’m now looking at how we might make these available to the rest of the LCNZ – especially congregations without their own pastor – so that we get the “home-grown” product, so-to-speak.

Check out Pastor Andy Marr’s Messages from Inside the Bubble at

https://fromthisbubble.blogspot.com/.

BUSINESS (not quite) AS NORMAL

In the same way that your pastors are regularly meeting, the governance and servant-leadership work of the Church continues. Your Council of Synod (COS) also meets each week, and the Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) met on Saturday. The LCNZ office staff – Ellen, Bec and me – also touch base once a week on ZOOM.

And the College of Bishops meets every Friday by teleconference too.

FACEBOOK

Many of you know that I’ve had a personal Facebook Page for some years now. I have used this page to share photos and all manner of personal and family things, and of course, rugby and cricket matters, including the odd forward pass (ref!!).

About 10 days ago, I established a new FB Page, exclusively for my ministry as Bishop of the LCNZ. Here’s what I’m posting on it …

- The Church@Home Daily Devotions
- My eNews
- Messages from Bishop John and the LCANZ
- HYMNS for the lock-down
- And anything else that I consider might offer encouragement and support to the Church

Check it out by searching for Bishop Mark Whitfield – Bishop of the Lutheran Church of New Zealand.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

Remember to take the directions of our government seriously … stay home … and stay in your “bubble.” This is the best thing we can do to save lives, and this is the way that we can love our neighbours as God asks and enables us to.

And remember … COVID-19 is contagious … but also, highly contagious is …

Arohanui
(big love) to you all in Christ; ngā mihi …