

UCANZ 240709

UCANZ Office



Uniting Congregations
OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Kia ora e te whanau

A week away with siblings and partners, and we're still friends! Northland turned on it's best for us, and we're grateful. Grateful to have been able to visit and enjoy the hospitality of this beautiful part of our country. Because of road works we were 'forced' onto alternative routes. The alternative road between Kaitaia and Kohukohu taking us, I seem to remember through Broadwood, (So we could cross on the literal roll-on/roll-off ferry crossing the Hokianga Harbour to Rawene) was wonderful. I was left wondering, however, if the District had managed a bulk rate for 45kmh signs – I've never seen so many – and all on one stretch of highway. Thank you also for the warmth and hospitality of the St Johns 'Golden' Church in Whangarei, and the Kaurihohore Church as we shared a day together.

Personal and Leadership Resources

Struggle to bed in commitments you're wanting to make? Form new habits, and new behaviour patterns? Akshad Singi offers some useful strategies for helping make things stick.

8 Genius Ways To Become Incredibly Consistent At Anything In Life

I really like the way that he builds 'exceptions' into his process – allowing enough wriggle room, yet also clear structure, room for 'forgiveness', and a simple strategies for getting back on track. It can be accessed here: <https://www.yourtango.com/self/how-become-consistent-anything-life>

Try This Science-Backed 4-Step Mental Primer

Henna Pryor channels Collin Henderson, a mental conditioning coach and author of several mindset books including [Quiet Mind](#) (2021) on strategies for starting the day in a focussed and intentional way that promotes us following through on our hopes and intentions for the day. How many times have you started badly (too much screen time etc) and found the rest of the day turns to custard? Here's some helpful strategies that can help us start as we mean to go on: <https://www.inc-aus.com/henna-pryor/try-this-science-backed-4-step-mental-primer.html>

Homilies

Trevor Hoggard's sermon surveys 2 Sam 6:1-5, 12b-19, and Mark 6:14-29. Trevor observes that the world is facing elections this year on an unprecedented scale that will determine our future, He contrasts Jesus' style of rulership with everyone else, while

observing that unfortunately Jesus is not on the ballot. Trevor's offering can be experienced here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdrqPSxxBPo>

My response to the Gospel text of Mark 6:14-29 and is titled 'Guilt's Grief' and is a response to Herod Antipas' reaction to the ministry of Jesus, seeing it as God's judgement against him for the execution of John the Baptist. It can be experienced here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f40U3dR-eaM>

But wait, there's more – I attend Evensong on Sunday evenings at the Christchurch Cathedral when I'm able. **Dean Ben Truman** gave a sermon that is worthy of wider audience, so I've attached the script to this email newsletter. Enjoy!

Again, it will help broaden our reach if you '**subscribe**' and '**like**'.

Once again, use the videos as you will.

As always, if you find you'd prefer not to receive this weekly newsletter, please let me know and your address will be removed.

Ngā manaakitanga

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Do Not Judge Another Rom 14:1 Welcome those who are weak in faith but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. 2 Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. 3 Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on slaves of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lordh is able to make them stand. 5 Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. 6 Those who observe the day, observe it for the Lord. Also those who eat, eat for the Lord, since they give thanks to God, while those who abstain, abstain for the Lord and give thanks to God. 7 For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give

praise to God.” 12 So then, each one of us will be held accountable. 13 Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother or sister. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who considers it unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is distressed by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let your good be slandered. 17 For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Ordinary Season: Ordinary

Passage: Romans 14:1-17

Place: Cardboard Cathedral Date: 7/7/24

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Do you remember the first time you lived with someone who wasn't part of your family? A flatmate, a spouse, a university roommate? Do you remember how long it was before you noticed their strange habits and idiosyncrasies? Do you remember how long it was between noticing the strangeness, and starting the passing comments or passive aggressive notes, or even outright hostility? People are strange. When I married Johannah, I became aware that there are two kinds of people, those that put cutlery in the dishwasher basket handle down, and those that are wrong. There are even some who order their cutlery drawer: Forks first, then knives, Even though it is plainly obvious that the knives should go in first. Cutting boards. Should they be stored vertically or horizontally? Handkerchiefs: ironed or just folded? When eating, I prefer to eat hot things and cold things separately. A few bites of salad, then a few bites of sausage. My wife will happily put a fork to her mouth with salad leaf and sausage together. Sacrilege. Then there's the question of whether Earl Grey and milk should go together, or the superiority of marmite over vegemite. Can I get an Amen! Living together is really hard, because we've usually grown up thinking that our way is the only way, and if not the only, certainly the best. And yes, these are minor things, but we all know just how much those minor things can create major problems! In the early church, Jewish and Gentile Christians were coming together and eating together for the first time. It turns

out to be immensely challenging. For the majority of the Jewish Christians there were some clear expectations. This was the day on which you met to do holy things. This was the way you washed your hands and pots before a meal, Here's what's on the menu and here's what's off. And it wasn't just the prohibitions on shellfish or pork that made the conversation a difficult one. Much of the available meat in Rome had been sacrificed to a god first, making it no-longer kosher in the sight of a Jewish person. Many, if not most, were functional vegetarians because cheap meat, that hasn't been offered to one of the Roman pantheon of Gods was really hard to come by. These early Christian gatherings were the first time most Jewish and Gentile communities had ever eaten with each other. Of course there was going to be frustration. And yes, in the scheme of things, it might have seemed like a small issue compared with what the divinity of Jesus and the Spirit meant to a Monotheistic faith, or the threats of persecution. But we know that those small daily differences can, if left unacknowledged, can be left to fester. It's a big issue. Paul writes about it here, but also in 1 Corinthians 8. In that passage, Paul writes primarily about the use and abuse of Christians freedoms and the limits to them. In this passage Paul is more concerned with unity and mutual love. Welcome those who are weak in faith but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions.* 2 Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.* 3 Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. A typically well-made point from Paul. If God has rolled out the welcome mat, how dare we set ourselves up as bouncers at the door. Some of those food-based quarrels continue today among the body of believers. - What labour practices have been involved in creating this food? - How ecologically sustainable is this food? What is the cost to the lakes and rivers and soil? How many miles has this travelled to get to me? - Eggs: Cage free? Free range? - Palm oil?: Does one boycott it because Amazonian rainforests are being replaced with this cash crop? Or is it an ethical option because it has high yields and therefore requires less land to produce it compared with other oils - With a cafe, are they paying their staff well? - Do they have a missional purpose like Addington Coffee Co-Op or Thrive? - What about restaurant names. I have to confess that Hell's pizza is pretty tasty, and I have a chuckle to myself, going in to order with a dog-collar on. A few weeks ago I joined the Bishop for a coffee at a bar named "Original Sin". Food, because it is so universal it is often the source of disagreements, even in the church today. Of course the principal applies well beyond food.

Guided by conscience, driven by love for the other, removing stumbling blocks and sacrificing our own preferences for the good of another. There are 1001 ways that could be lived out today. One setting for that is how we gather as church. Liturgical churches are at risk of sitting smugly with ancient traditions, while the nondenominational mega churches share their often ill-informed prejudices against them. Neither are treating the other as a beloved sister or brother in Christ when passing judgement. Some churches hold the sacrament of communion of such importance that it must be celebrated every week. Others believe communion to be so sacred, that to celebrate it every week would be to cheapen it. Even this morning at our Kidsfest service we acknowledged that a traditionally structures service might be a stumbling block to the faith of children, and so we set aside some of the things that we love (communion, some sung anthems, some predictability and silence) so that we could serve the 'other' To live in Christian Community is to always ask the dual question a) What does God ask of me? and b) How will what I am doing impact on my brothers and sisters in Christ? Just like in any marriage, this new union requires love and compromise. And we can best do that by reminding ourselves of 1 John 4:19 - We Love, because God first loved us. When we fully understand all the God gifts to us, the minor stuff really does fall away. May we as God's children not be people known for what we are against, but rather what we a for - freedom and sacrifice and a deep love of the 'other'. Let us not be people who major in the minors, but rather a people who keep the main thing the main thing For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.