

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I'm back in the office today. It was an interesting start to the work year for 2023: splish splashing my way out to the car, sprays of water as I drove in through surface flooding. A dash from the car to the church door. The books and papers I was carrying now marked by rain drops and slightly soggy, as am I. Somewhat jokingly I thought I hope ex tropical cyclone Hale is just not some sort of indicator of what the year will be like. Well really it just summed up that back to work blues (or in this case greys) that we all experience when we come back to work after a good long holiday.

I want to thank Lorne Campbell and the team for doing the Christmas services this year. I know they put such a lot of effort and energy into them, and I heard it was a cracker of a Christmas Eve service. It was great to have a relaxed Christmas with my family. I actually stayed awake on Christmas afternoon, a first my kids tell me in living memory. Although as I sat in a deck chair in the afternoon sun, the family texted to each other, don't let dad fall asleep in the sun he hasn't got a sun hat on. I joined in the trivia games and other activities we had. It was great to be in Tauranga with Kris' extended family. I remember in a quiet moment on Boxing Day, at yet another family meal, that I had this real sense of belonging with these people.

This is not just what I did on my holiday's sort of story. It is leading somewhere. You see I had that same feel of family and belong with these people as I came to church at Hope Whangarei last Sunday. From the joyful smiling welcome at the door, the gentle ribbing about "Oh are you visiting", and "I haven't seen you in a while". Being able to sit in the pews and enjoy the worship, with a real sense of God's presence with us. The encouragement of sitting between two couples who were visiting and getting their feedback about the service, which was quite positive. Then just catching up with folk from all our sites, all together, enjoying fellowship and God's presence.

I think rather than the stormy weather setting the scene for the coming year, I will take what my eye was drawn to on the whiteboard by my desk, which I pray for you this year... "May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." - Romans 15:13

Here are the notices.

### [Sunday Worship January 15<sup>th</sup>](#)

9:30am Combined service at HopeCentral. Nehemiah 1 (rev Howard Carter)

We are lead this week by our team from HopeOnerahi. We also start our major series leading into Easter. We are exploring the book of Nehemiah: from Vision to reality... looking at how God is able to take us from where we are now into what Andy Stanley calls 'Gods preferred future'.

## Worship January 22<sup>nd</sup>

From this week onwards we are going back to three services at our three sites. However the message at Tikipunga and Onerahi will be via video as we continue through our series on Nehemiah.

10:00am	HopeTikipunga	Nehemiah 2:1-10 (Howard Carter)
9:30am	HopeCentral	Nehemiah 2:1-10 (Howard Carter)
9:30am	HopeOnerahi	Nehemiah 2:1-10 (Howard Carter)

## Church office hours

The church office is still officially closed until January 16<sup>th</sup> If there are any pastoral needs please contact Howard Carter on 0277508602.

## Lorne Campbell is on leave til Feb 1st.

Lorne is on leave for the second half of January. He and Sue will be away from tomorrow (Jan 11th) until Feb 1st. Please keep them in your prayers, that they may have a great relaxing time and a chance to catch up with their growing family.



Many congratulations to Merv and Edna Paul ... who celebrated 69 years of marriage yesterday, January 9<sup>th</sup>.

## Devotional Insights through Nehemiah (& Ezra). Would you like a copy?

This Sunday, Howard is beginning the series we are doing together preaching through the book of Nehemiah. Our Daily Bread have published a 60 day devotional Journal featuring both Ezra and Nehemiah. There are a few left and they will be in the foyer at Central this Sunday, otherwise they are kept with Colleen in the Church office.

If you would like a copy, please contact her. We suggest a donation of \$5.00 per copy. Please note for those who prefer things online, you can access the devotional series by Robert Solomon at <https://journeythrough.org/courses/ezra-nehemiah/>

## Thank you from the Chaplaincy team:

Elaine Holwell would like to say A BIG THANK YOU to all those who made biscuits and came in to help package them up and deliver them on December 20th to our neighbouring businesses in the CBD. Many of the recipients were greatly blessed and encouraged.

## Offerings

Giving up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December is: \$108,158.07 against a budgeted figure of \$116,496.00

## Blessing

Maybe it's that first line about rain, but let me finish the pastoral email today with this wonderful passage from Isaiah 55. One that I think focuses us on the incarnation of Jesus, God's word and is echoed in Jesus words on the cross 'it is finished' but is also is the basis of our hope and trust in God and God's faithfulness.

As the rain and the snow  
come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it  
without watering the earth  
and making it bud and flourish,  
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,  
11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:  
It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Ka rite hoki ki te ua rāua ko te hukarere e rere  
iho ana i te rangi,  
ā e kore e hoki ki reira;  
engari e whakamākūkū ana i te whenua,  
e mea ana kia whai hua, kia pihi ake,  
kia hōmai anō he purapura mā te kaiwhakatō,  
he taro ma te tangata e kai an a:  
11 Ka pēnā anō tāku kupu e puta ana i tōku māngai:  
e kore e hoki kau, mai ki ahau;  
engari ka meatia tāku i pai ai,  
ka taea hoki tāku i unga atu ai.

Blessings

*Howard Carter*

**SENIOR MINISTER**  
**HOPEWHANGĀREI**

January 10<sup>th</sup> 2023

Ps: - I took many photos over my holiday, but possibly the most poignant one was of a female dotterel sitting on her nest at Ruakaka Estuary. It was taken on January 4<sup>th</sup>, just as the next stormy weather was about to come through. The Dotterel (Tuturiwhatu) sits and closes its eyes against the wind driven sand. Sadly when I went back to check on the nest on Sunday it had been washed away by the large waves.

