



St Ronan's Presbyterian Church
Eastbourne

Record

February 2025

2 February	Shared service with Anglicans at St Ronan's.....	9.30am
9 February	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
16 February	Ross Scott.....	9.30am
23 February	Informal worship service.....	9.30am
2 March	Shared service with Anglicans at San Antonio's.....	9.30am

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Power Hour – Sundays 9.30am
Breakfast Prayer – Tuesdays 8.00am
Mainly Music – Thursdays 9.15-11.15am

For pastoral care needs, please contact one of the Local Shared Ministry team
Reg Weeks 027 491 5947, Wendy McCarter 027 255 6928, Simon Shaw 562 8772,
Colin Dalziel 562 7238, Sandy Lang 562 8753

Visiting & celebrating family in the USA...

When traveling to the northern hemisphere for Christmas one expects there to be snow! Well, it did snow the second night we were in Milliken, Colorado, but from Thanksgiving to Christmas the weather remained clear and sunny though rather cold. That was apart from a delightful couple of days at Estes Park, a little town up in the mountains adjacent to the Rocky Mountain National Park. A drive through the park to Bear's Lake, fully frozen, took us through all the snow we could ever wish for.



What struck us most, however, were the Christmas lights adorning trees and houses, turning the streets into a magic

fairyland as soon as it got dark, around 5 o'clock. One family had organised a link with the local radio station. so you could tune in and listen while parked outside their home, as the whole display kept time to the music...!

Also, the town's Christmas parade was after dark; a great assortment of floats and vehicles all aglow with ingenious lighting creatively displayed. But for the most part our stay in Colorado was a relaxing time with family and friends,

watching football (American style), walking, reading, doing jigsaws and playing card games.

Just before Christmas we travelled to join new family in the 'City of the Angels'. Again, the weather continued fine and a little warmer than Colorado. We were there to celebrate the marriage of our niece and her partner with a lunch at the Getty Museum. There, they made their vows and exchanged rings. That was part of a week-long occasion for a dozen close members of both families; to gather daily for quality time together at their home, to occasionally eat out, and to visit such places as the seaside attractions at Santa Monica, the famous LA Tar Pits, and also the incredible extravaganza run by Universal studios.

We celebrated New Year's Eve together by watching the fireworks display after a delightful meal at a seaside restaurant. Then, over the next few days, those who had gathered, many who had not met before, flew home to such far-flung places as Denver, Boston, Portugal, Senegal, and back here to New Zealand, rich in new friends and treasured memories.



Reg Weeks

Clerk's corner...

Police checks: I'm still waiting on the police checks I requested on 20 Oct 2024 for those working with our most vulnerable people. I'm told the delay is due to overloaded police processing. Why not extend the (arbitrary) 3-year validity of a police check to 4-years, and reduce the work...?

Offices for lease: Our tenant for what was the 'minister's office' (back of the church, south side) has just moved out so this office is again available for lease to the community. The 'church office' (back of the church, north side) could also be made available if there were the demand for this too. We don't use either of these offices, with no minister and with church administration now all done electronically, and from home.



These offices are both very quiet (most of the time) and very private. Each office is of 17 m², has Wi-Fi, and its own external access.

If **you know anyone** who might like an office in Eastbourne – e.g., a small home-based business with insufficient room at home...? Put the word out there, please...!

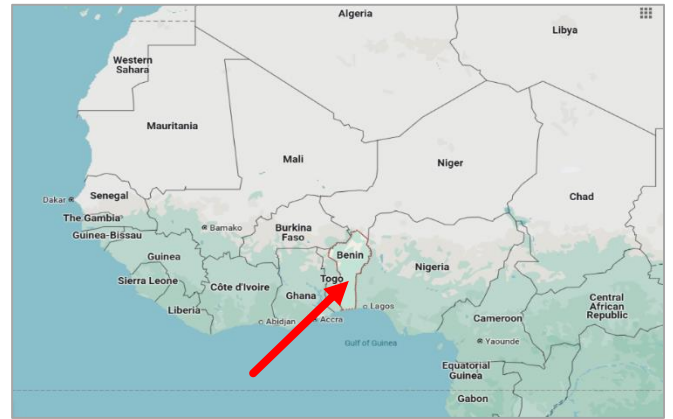
e: slang@xtra.co.nz **t:** 562 8752 **m:** 021 222 0383

Sandy Lang

Rood screen – Remembering Matilda...

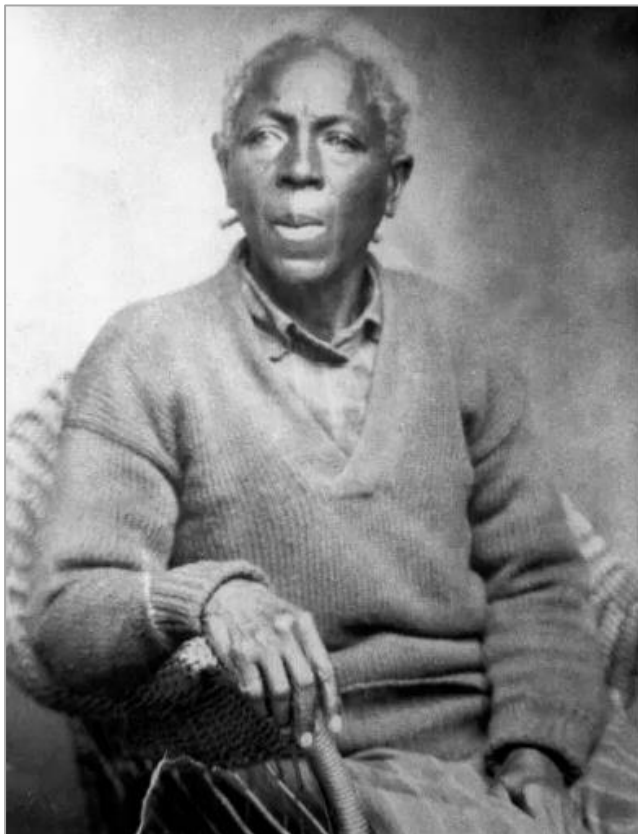
Who is (or was) Matilda? And why should we remember her?

On 13 January 1940, 85 years ago, Matilda McCrear passed away. Until her death, Matilda was the last surviving passenger on the last-ever slave ship bound from the West African coast to North America in late 1859.



Matilda's birth name was 'Abake'. Ironically, in the Yoruba language of Benin, this means 'born to be loved by all'. But slaves were given western names by their owners, and so for most of her life Abake was known as Matilda.

Abake was just two years old when she was captured, along with her mother and her three older sisters. I have grandchildren of that age and they are truly 'loved by all'. I weep to think of Matilda...



In 1865, all remaining slaves were liberated – but that was in name only. With no resources and draconian laws, most went straight into some form of economic slavery. The lot of the black man or woman in 1940 was still not a happy one.

If you are interested to read Matilda's story, there's an excellent book by Ben Haines *'The Last Slave Ship'*. Alternatively, if you Google **remembering matilda** a link will take you to an excellent *Al Jazeera* article about her.

My reason for writing about Matilda now, is we have just passed through the season of goodwill. It is all too easy to forget that, as recently as 2021, it's estimated 50 million people are still living in slavery - that's about one in every 150 people - Google **Walk Free**. Modern slavery is hidden in plain sight. Slavery is deeply intertwined with life in every corner of the world.

As we make our New Year resolutions, I ask you to ask yourself 'What would Jesus have me do?'

John Harris

Introducing Wendy McCarter...

[On Sun 15 Dec, Presbytery Central Moderator, Rev Leanne Munro, commissioned Wendy McCarter as the new member of St Ronan's Local Shared Ministry Team. This is a significant new appointment for St Ronan's, as well as for Wendy. Wendy's focus will be on pastoral matters, but she will also of course be involved in other key leadership responsibilities and actions of St Ronan's LSMT. We asked Wendy for a brief bio... She offers this. Ed]



Wendy writes... *"My life in a nutshell..." I was born in South Africa, yes, during apartheid but as a young child I was very unaware of the growing political upheaval; nor was I particularly aware of the intense global scrutiny that South Africa was attracting.*

Shortly after my schooling, I moved to Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia until 1965, then just Rhodesia). This is where I married and started my family, where my love for the wide-open spaces, wildlife, fishing, cycling, walking and being in nature developed. I was fortunate enough to spend time in the game reserves, and on the Zambezi River with either a camera or fishing rod in my hand. It was a special time watching my children growing up learning the ways of the bush.

Africa comes with its challenges and, 22 years later, due to the political changes in Zimbabwe, the insecurity, the lack of law and order, we left this beautiful, bruised country and moved north to Zambia. Slightly closer to the equator, with a hotter climate but mild winters, this was a busy 14 years. My girls were sent to private boarding schools as was the custom, for public schools were not an option. So, we were always seeing children off at airports, or putting them on buses to do weekly boarding.

Fast forward... relationships changed, children started 'flying the coop', and with that I decided to relocate as well; it was time to leave Africa for something more stable, the beginning of the next chapter in my life.

I arrived in New Zealand six years ago. After spending the first three years in beautiful Bay of Plenty, I'm now fortunate enough to have done the last three years in Wellington. No Camera or fishing rod, but good walking shoes, and a bicycle! I am now the one getting on flights to visit my girls, who are spread around the world, their roosting spots for the moment are: Border Ranges, in New South Wales, Australia; the UK and Dublin, Ireland. I am the one now being seen off and met at airports. How the wheels turn...

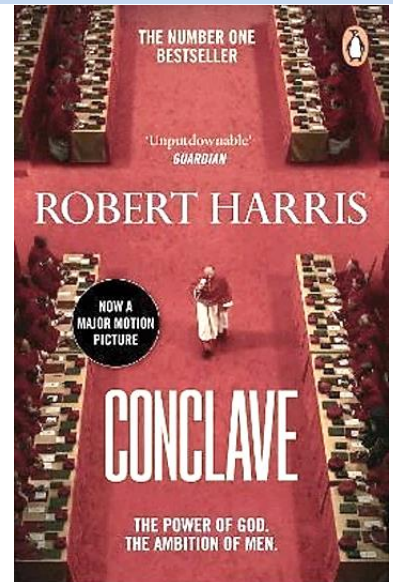
Wendy McCarter

Conclave...

I heartily recommend you see this 5-star movie. It's already a classic and it just *must* win a whole lot of awards.

It is described online as 'a 2024 political thriller film directed by Edward Berger and written by Peter Straughan, based on the 2016 novel by Robert Harris.' I've just read the *Kindle* version of the book to which the movie is remarkably faithful.

Want to know more and see the trailer?
Just Google [Conclave](#)



But what I want to share with you here, is the short homily delivered by Cardinal Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes). The book and the movie are both **fictional** but whoever penned these words really understood some important stuff about our faith and about the Christian church. And he says it so well that it deserves closer consideration by anyone who considers themselves Christian...!

The whole script (context) from which this short section is taken, can be found by Googling [scrapsfromtheloft conclave](#). From about

halfway through the script, Cardinal Lawrence's homily reads...

(in Italian):

"Dear Brothers in Christ, at the moment of great uncertainty, in the history of the Holy Church, we must think first of the late Holy Father, whose brilliant pontificate was a gift from God, now we must ask our Lord to send us a new Holy Father, through the pastoral solicitude of the cardinal fathers. And we must pray to God for that loving assistance, and ask Him to guide us to the right choice".

(in English): But you know all that... Let me speak from the heart for a moment.

St Paul said, 'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.'
To work together, and to, er... to grow together, we must be tolerant.
No one person or... or faction seeking to dominate another.

And speaking to the Ephesians, who were of course a mixture of Jews and gentiles, Paul reminds us that God's gift to the church... is its variety.
It is this variety, this diversity of people and views which gives our church its strength.

And over the course of many years in the service of our Mother the Church, let me tell you, there is one sin, which I have come to fear above all others.
Certainty.

Certainty is the great enemy of unity. Certainty is the deadly enemy of tolerance. Even Christ was not certain at the end.

(in Italian): My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

(in English): He cried out in his agony at the ninth hour on the cross.

Our faith is a living thing, precisely because it walks hand-in-hand with doubt. If there was only certainty... and no doubt... there would be no mystery... and therefore no need... for faith.

Let us pray that God will grant us a Pope who doubts. And let him grant us a Pope who sins and asks for forgiveness, and who carries on.

Contributed by **Sandy Lang**

Supporting 'Nourish Trust'...

On January 5, 2025, as part of celebrating Epiphany with our St Albans and San Antonio friends, we heard from *Nourish Trust* about the gifts they give to children and their families in the Wellington area around Christmas. Not gold, frankincense and myrrh, as the wise men presented to Jesus, but around \$150 worth of nourishing food to each family, most in need.

Trust co-founder Claire Turner (from Eastbourne) was volunteering at a school where she saw that school holidays put extra pressure on struggling families. Their children would not have the term-time support of the free school lunch or breakfast, fruit in schools, or other such programmes.

Unlike her own offspring, these kids had little to look forward to at Christmas.



So, *Nourish Trust* was established in 2014 with the simple mission – “...to show we care and support families doing it tough by providing them with a hamper of nourishing food at Christmas.”

The *Nourish Trust* partners with primary schools who identify families who would most benefit from a hamper of food at Christmas time.

A registered charity staffed only by volunteers, all the donations to *Nourish Trust* are used for the benefit of the recipients. Often these families are very moved when they receive the surprise of a very welcome gift - without even having to ask or apply for help.

Ways to help include: donations, volunteering and business sponsors. To find out more, check out their website www.nourishtrust.org

There are many directives from Jesus to help feed others. In the gospels we read that he miraculously fed 5,000 plus people, and on another occasion another 4,000, with help in the food distribution from his disciples - and the initial donation was from a boy's lunch!

But to keep a Christmassy theme, here are Mary's words from what we now call the *Magnificat*, while she was pregnant with Jesus when she praised God saying...“*God gives the hungry, good things to eat and sends the rich away with nothing.*”

God bless the work of *Nourish Trust* and those who gratefully receive their gifts. And those too who work in other areas of social justice, so that putting food on the family table is not too difficult for every family.

Gill Burke

Power Hour: Children's Christmas Nativity Pageant

The Power Hour pageant evokes feelings of joyfulness each year when we come together as a congregation to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We feel united. We feel happy. We feel like we are one big family. We feel the celebration of the true Spirit of Christmas.

Thanks to the fine scripting of Elspeth Cotsilinis, our Advent 2024 pageant, *Gift-Giving at Christmas*, worked on both the real and the symbolic levels.

To start, we were inspired by the Wise-men's gifting to Jesus. The Wise-men knew from their astrology, that Jesus was a king. Hence, the **first** precious gift was of gold, reserved for only very special people such as kings. It shows wealth, power and respect.

The **second** gift was of the sweet-smelling tree gum, frankincense. This was not only scarce but also used in worship as religious incense to pervade the temple with a spiritual atmosphere. Accordingly, Jesus was to be so honoured.

The **third** gift was of myrrh. This has healing properties and importantly was used in burial practices. Myrrh thus represented Jesus' future suffering and death and the sacrifice of his purposeful life to save us all.



The pageant linked into the later tradition of placing a gift for loved ones under a Christmas tree. These Christmas tree gifts were symbolic of Jesus' wish for us to be always selflessly loving all year round. We are empowered to share the love of Jesus and love of God with everyone. Hence, the message of sharing the gift of Christmas is an everyday occurrence for everyone.



In the pageant performance, the Power Hour children (Emma, Blake, Zephram, Mills, Serek) looked grand in their self-selected Wise men and star attires.

They thought they were rather cool looking too, and felt they were on an important mission. Did you see how Blake improvised spontaneously with her walking stick *a la* an

umbrella she spied in the church foyer? Responsibly, they carried their roles with esteem. Their fluent reading abilities have now taken them to new heights of performance.

Four years ago, Serek was our 'baby Jesus' - this year he transformed well into the leading star. I loved the added majesty they brought with their slow and solemn walking down the aisle. Such honour they conveyed to the occasion, all done in tempo to Colin Dalziel's playing, 'O Holy Night', and his own compositions 'Have Faith in the Child of Christmas' and 'The Star is Shining'. Later as a reminder, the children were gifted frankincense soap.



Gathering for our congregational group photo rounded out our day, with our photographer, Phil Bengé, catching us all in a merry mood.

Our celebration of the 'Gift Giving at Christmas' concluded at morning tea by

sharing our Christmas cake – the batter earlier having been compounded by the Power Hour children and stirred by the congregation.

Thank you and special blessings to everyone for making our Christmas meaningful and heart-felt.

POWER HOUR TERM 1 16 FEBRUARY TO 6 APRIL

Susan Connell

Huge turnout for the 'Eastbourne Community Carols'...

Live stable animals featured in last year's Eastbourne Community Christmas carols, held on Dec 8, 2024, at St Ronan's Church.

The planning group, working on behalf of all three Eastbourne churches, believed the animals would be a real attraction for the children. And so, it proved to be. The sheep dog, the sheep and the pony were all very well behaved, taking up their positions round the manger, set up on the church lawn for the children to enjoy at the end of the service.



The church was packed, upstairs and down (180+ people), with a number having to stand in the church foyer for the hour-long service. Whether the

event should return to the Muritai School Hall this year will be a decision for this year's planning group. But many people at last year's event, which was led by Sue Brown and Anne Manchester, said how much they'd enjoyed the buzz of being in a full church – it's not something we experience very often these days.

The event included many of the successful elements from the 2023 gathering – a telling of the nativity story (with some fun and undemanding audience participation), some local musicians to accompany the singing of favourite carols, a collection of money and non-perishable food for the Wellington City Mission, and Santa appearing at the end with a wheelbarrow full of ice blocks. Santa did miss his cue, however, and arrived a little early, contributing to the sense of controlled chaos...!



There was no shortage of manger participants

Children were invited to come dressed as their favourite nativity character or could choose to don a simple costume during the service. Others with starring roles included *Sing Eastbourne*, the *Muritai School Kapa Haka rōpū* and children from *Mainly Music*.

The Eastbourne Community Carols, after a lapse of a couple of years, has again become a must in the community calendar.

Anne Manchester



Our God calls us to worship and grow together and to show the love of Christ through serving our community.

Directory

St Ronan's Presbyterian Church,
234 Muritai Road, Eastbourne, Lower Hutt, 5013

Local Ministry Team

Reg Weeks	027 491 5947	third.age@outlook.co.nz
Wendy McCarter	027 255 6928	13wmccarter@gmail.com
Sandy Lang	562 8753	slang@xtra.co.nz
Simon Shaw	562 8772	simonjshaw@xtra.co.nz
Colin Dalziel	562 7238	colinjdalziel@gmail.com

Parish Clerk	Sandy Lang
Hall Bookings	Sandy Lang

Contributions for the 'Record' are most welcome.
Please email them to lesmolloy7@gmail.com
Phone (04) 568 3377

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.
They do not necessarily represent those of St Ronan's Church.

**And the closing date for our next *Record* for March 2025
is Sunday 23 February 2025**