

KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

KNOX LIFE

June 2023



Revisiting the Past

A recent trip took me past the church at which I ministered from 1996 to 2005, St George's, Takapuna, so I decided to pop in and take a look around. In the olden days, the main doors to the church were open during the day, so people could come and go easily - sometimes, yes, going with church property under their arms. These days, visitors need to enter via the office, much like here at Knox. The person in the office was certainly not the same one from twenty years ago - things change, but was wonderfully friendly. (Later, she spread the word that I'd dropped by, so I got a few emails from "old parishioners" saying it was sad we hadn't "caught up". One of the emails told me about how people were, who had died recently, and who'd been flooded in the January rains.) Having "checked in" at the office, I went through into the church and had a "sit down". I was struck immediately by what a wonderful physical space the church is, and many lovely memories came back. I noted to my consolation and amusement that the corner to the left of the sanctuary that used mysteriously to fill up with junk (even though I was always removing junk) was, nineteen year later, still full of junk! Sitting in the same place I'd sat in 2004 for a few "farewell photos", I took a selfie.



These sorts of "before and after" shots are often salutary. Looking at the "before" shot, I'm aware of all the things that happened for me after I left what was a happy and comparatively simple place. I'm struck by how much I have changed since then. Visiting the past can do that. I wonder why we visit the past.

Further North from Takapuna, I spent time at Waitangi, in the Bay of Islands. The kaitiaki of Waitangi do an amazing job at presenting the Waitangi story, and

opening up to view how much we have changed since 1840. It's good to have had a chance to visit our national past, and to come away with some thoughts about how we might change further as a nation in the next 183 years. Visiting the past can galvanise our thoughts about the present and the future.

One of the things I have always enjoyed in terms of preparing worship is engaging with texts from the past, with the view to understanding more fully who we are in the present and what kind of a world we could be building for the future. The Christian faith **does** have a vision of the future, in which tears and crying are no more, and reconciliation is real, and the love of God is evident - the "new creation". Into that future, the Christ says "will you come and follow me . . ."
John Bell, a Scottish hymn writer, wrote:

*Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?*

*Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?*

*Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.*

Arohanui,

Matthew.

CHURCH COUNCIL NOTES

The busy Easter season has come and gone and Council thanked Matthew for his wonderful series of services throughout Lent and Easter. Rochelle Howley was thanked for her striking floral presentations over Easter and Doug Shaw and helpers were thanked for the delightful Easter Breakfast.

Jan Harland has resigned from her position as Knox pastoral visitor, for personal reasons. After more than seven years of service she deserves her retirement! She was thanked for her work, which has been much appreciated and a thank you gift has been given. Council is now embarking on the task of finding a new pastoral assistant.

Trudy Heney has taken temporary leave from council. Two council committees have been reconvened - Administration and Christian Education. The death of David Carmichael, minister at Knox from 1981-1986, was noted. A memorial service for Valerie Heinz, a longtime member of the Session/Council, took place at Knox in April.

The Knox Trust has funded the installation of a defibrillator in the church and a training session will be held to enable people to feel comfortable using it in case of need. Thanks to Jean Brouwer for her work on this project.

The newly established Justice and Compassion Trust has granted Knox \$4000 to run a short course in Te Reo and Te Ao Maori. Although we have used a little Maori language in our services for many years, most of us are not really sure of pronunciation and with Te Reo becoming much more commonly used in everyday life we feel that the opportunity to acquire a bit of basic knowledge may be appreciated by some of the congregation. Matthew will work with the proposed tutor on details of the course, which will be notified in due course.

In March we had a visit from Nathaniel Herz- Edinger who spoke to us about the Living Wage Movement which works to encourage all employers to pay their employees a wage sufficient to meet essential needs. In September the official Living Wage amount will rise to \$26 per hour.

Support of Te Whare Roimata continues, with our weekly donations of food and other essentials being greatly appreciated. Doug Shaw is our main contact with Te Whare and he reported that our recent gifts of blankets and rugs are helping to ensure a warmer winter for many in need.

Finally, we thank Sheila Cuthbertson who has again made knitted poppies for Anzac Day. Sales raised over \$600 for the RSA, a great result.

Janet Wilson

Coming Services and Events

Services

June 4	King's Birthday
July 16	Matariki
August 6	Peace Sunday
September 10	Spring Sunday
October 15	Animal Sunday

Bible Study Group - Wednesdays 10-11am in the Knox Lounge. All welcome.

Events

Sunday May 21 - 7pm in the Knox Lounge

Dr Ozayr Ameen, a practising neurologist, will be speaking about strokes. He'll tell us about signs and causes, with an emphasis on rehabilitation. With recent publicity about strokes occurring in people of any age, this Knox Cafe evening will be of interest to everyone.

Sunday lunches

Third Sunday of each month - 12 noon at Oderings cafe in Stourbridge Street, Barrington. Names on the list at church entrances or email Janneke Nuysink <jannekenuysink@gmail.com>

Sunday afternoon films

Knox lounge at 4pm usually monthly. See Notices in weekly Order of Service or contact Bronwyn Wiltshire <bronwynwiltshire@gmail.com>

NB. No afternoon communion service is currently scheduled.

On Friday 14 July the office will be closed for the celebration of Matariki.

The only way to truly "overcome" an enemy is to help him become other than an enemy. This is the kind of wisdom we find in Gandhi. It is the wisdom of the Gospels.

Thomas Merton

Letter received from Te Whare Roimata

Hi ya Doug

I thought you may like to tell your parishioners a couple of stories about what Knox's help means.

Today at Gold Coin Café we were able to have a beautiful fish pie as a result of the tins of tuna donated. Fish is something we rarely get to have because of the cost. We received happy comments from our diners. A big thank you.

On Tuesday we were able to gift a pink mink blanket to an older woman who has just been diagnosed with lung cancer and is starting to feel the cold. She chose the pink one as it made her feel cheerful and helped her think happy thoughts. Each time I have seen her since getting the blanket, she has spoken about how much it means to her. What might seem a little gift means the world when life feels bleak.

Please do thank the people of Knox Church and let them know how appreciated their gifts are.

Every blessing,
Jenny

Poppies

A huge thank you to all who contributed to the fantastic amount of \$\$ that we are going to be able to hand over to the RSA for Sheila's knitted poppies. A total sum of \$634.10!! Many many thanks to you all especially the Choir, Aldersgate, Tangata Atumotu Trust and the New Brighton Market.



QUEEN'S CORONATION

I was 6 on Coronation Day in June 1953 when Queen Elizabeth II was crowned. My big concern was that I had a bandage on my knee as I'd fallen and grazed it and I thought the Queen would notice. As it happened, she didn't, which is hardly surprising as she was in London and I was in my home town of Exeter in Devon.

My mother made me a beautiful dress. It was white and decorated with red, white and blue striped ribbons and bows. The bandage did show just below the hem.

We went round to Nana and Grandpa's to watch the coronation on TV. This was the first time I'd seen TV. Many people purchased their first TV especially for the occasion. Even as a child the screen seemed small and of course it was all black and white. The blinds were drawn in the front room so we could see the picture better but it made for a rather gloomy atmosphere. We children had to be quiet. It was long and very boring. The only bit I remember was the golden coach. I knew it was golden even though it looked grey on the screen. I think my brother had a Matchbox model of the coach with the horses. They were definitely produced.

We had a party, not in our street but in the church hall and we were all given our Coronation mug. I've still got mine. It has the Exeter coat of arms on one side and a picture of the Queen with a crown and flags on the other. I think every child in the country received a mug.

Our family had a friend called Win. I thought she was old but now I realise she would have been about 30. Win wasn't married and she worked in Bobby's, a department store in Exeter. I thought she was very glamorous. Win went up to London to see the coronation which was exciting enough but she went up the night before and she slept on the pavement in a sleeping bag. Oh, how I longed to go too!

Ever since, I've loved the Queen and the royal family. I've collected other mugs and coins and stamps and books. I don't take much notice of all the gossip and scandal. I'm a royalist to the end.

And so it dawned on me that 70 years later when I'm 76, I'll be watching a coronation again. This time, in New Zealand, on a much bigger screen and in colour with the curtains closed like at Nana and Grandpa's, not so we could see the screen better, but because it was night-time for us! We

started at 7pm watching on BBC and finished at 1.30am and just loved it all. Some highlights were:

- The wonderful close-up views we got of the King and Queen in their carriage and how they seemed to be waving and smiling just at us. I waved back.
- Seeing the NZ flag flying along the Mall.
- All the wonderful music, both old and new.
- Noticing the 4 empty seats in the front for William and Kate and the children and imagining there was some sort of hiccup with the kids. Someone told me they were getting their robes on.
- The soloist with the yellow dress and the huge yellow sleeves. We thought she looked like a daffodil.
- The hats especially the ones like flying saucers.
- The moment when Camilla was crowned and she pushed back bits of her hair out of her eyes.
- The fantastic views of inside Westminster Abbey. Those cameras way up high.
- And of course, the actual ceremony and service itself with all the symbolic ancient items, especially the actual moment of crowning with the Archbishop loudly proclaiming "God Save the King" and then the singing of *Zadok the Priest* and then our chance to sign *God Save Our Gracious King*.
- Finally, there was the golden coach that I remembered from my childhood.

We kept watching right through until we saw the crowds pouring down the Mall and then saw the Royal Family come out onto the balcony and finally the fly past.

Linda Wilkins at Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II



Reflections by June

Speaking as a relative “new-comer” to Knox..... if you had told me 40+ years ago that I’d be living happily in Christchurch in 2023, I’d have seriously doubted your rationale, but here I am - yes, the Lord truly does work in mysterious ways!

My path back to Canterbury was circuitous and strewn with potholes. When I arrived (feeling emotionally “battle scarred” and adrift), I asked one of my new neighbours, a delightful, retired nursing nun, “Where would be the nearest Presbyterian Church?” She said she’d ask a “Presbyterian friend” of hers – turned out her friend is Anglican but we won’t quibble. Her help was invaluable – she pointed me towards Knox.

While living in Culverden I always admired the lovely church on the corner of Bealey Avenue and Victoria Street on my frequent shopping/business sorties to Christchurch. Many years later (post- earthquake) on visits to my daughter, it was heart-breaking to see this beautiful building broken and behind high metal fences. Little did I know then that in the not too distant future, Knox would become “my church”.

I had attended St Andrews in Culverden (now a Presbyterian/Anglican Union parish); St Paul’s Union Parish (Presbyterian/Methodist), Cambridge; and St Columba, Tauranga. The Church “families” in all parishes are similar but “different.” I’ve always felt welcome and “included” (I even sang in St Paul’s choir, but I’m not saying that out loud). St Columba’s women’s breakfasts were a real hit. Maybe that’s something we could look into??

The care and thoughtfulness shown to me from Day One is heart-warming and uplifting. On my second Sunday at Knox, Lesley and John invited me to their home for lunch – a truly beautiful gesture, thank you! I love the passing of Peace and the easy fellowship of the monthly lunches at Oderings. Mathew’s sermons are brilliant – powerful and thought-provoking, a wonderful combination of talent and hard work - and I love it that several of the hymns are accredited to him. We are SO blessed by the wonderful music every Sunday, Jeremy’s brilliant talent and the Knox Singers’ beautiful harmonies.

Thank you, Knox, for the love and support shown me when my eldest brother died very suddenly last September. And speaking of family – since moving here, I have found a 95-year-old cousin who I didn’t know I had!! Alan is one of only two laymen to become the Moderator of

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. He's a lovely man, but I truly believe it's time for him to hang up his driving gloves.....

With love and gratitude,
June



Lifelong Learning

We hear a lot about the state of our world that could easily drive us into a fog of despair. Since, of late, I have been encouraging people to come together to open minds and hearts to the world of Spirit, I need to give a brief message of explanation. I wonder if you have been asking yourself; “Why is this man talking about medieval mystics, Cosmic Christ and the writings of a monk in the Kentucky woods?”

Here's my tale. I come from humble beginnings, never really shone at school until I grasped a cricket bat, drifted on to Teacher's College and ended back as a teacher in my old school. As a young teacher, I felt myself called to prepare for ministry. At my late age I thought it would be “feet up and warming a pew” but I find that I am more excited about the challenge of being Christian than ever.

What is the motivation? I feel the importance in these troubled times to be exploring the resources of our theological and spiritual heritage. I know a lot of people say the church is a spent force in the modern world. But I have found the signs of a new awakening based on the coming together of modern science and the mystical traditions of all religions that shows they are on virtually, the same page, in understanding what we would like to call “reality”; the new Universe story replaces the Newtonian world that thought of space as blank and dead, creation as static and going nowhere and humans as just one species that was here by luck.

Now we are facing some of our biggest challenges of survival, perhaps humankind may learn to listen to the sages of old, the wisdom of indigenous cultures and the spiritual luminaries of our own tradition to be open in humility to listen for the spiritual entities that are willing to help us in problems we certainly shall not solve in time by our whizzing gadgets. We are in need of an Awakening that pulses through damaged nature and it will come through the spirit world itself. We need to plumb the sources of compassion, wisdom and find new paths in our worlds of economics, industry, education and medicine. It is a most exciting time to be alive.

So, I have enjoyed sharing Mother Julian gazing at her hazelnut and seeing a picture of the vast Universe suffused with God's love, while outside her anchorage the Bubonic plague was in a holocaust of death around her. I am challenged by Hildegarde of Bingen (composer of the first opera, brilliant artist, healer and herbalist and strong abbess) when she says I am to be green, growing, verdant and most useful, never mind excuses about your age. I love to read Meister Eckhart and his picture of

God as a “great underground river that no one can stop” because it suggests to me that here are energies flowing through our spaces and times from the Source in God and we simply need to tap into them by meditation and silence. I am always happy when I companion the monk Thomas as he walks in his woods listening to the psalmody of the frogs, the birds and wind in the trees and the rain on the roof of his hermitage.

So long as there are people who want to join with me to share in this feast of inspiration, I will continue to offer short spurts of common life in an atmosphere of respect and encouragement for all to work out what is playing out in our lives. Some people were unable to come to these events and for them, I have compiled some booklets of notes which will be available soon. I have also asked some people to share in the way forward to our educational mission of helping adult Christians get up to date on what is a growing movement of Progressive Christianity.

Len Pierce

Rev. John Hunt – 50 Years



On Sunday 14 May 2023 the whole congregation at Knox joined together in praise of one of their much-loved members, Rev. John Hunt, who was celebrating the 50th year of his ordination. Matthew spoke on behalf of

the congregation and introduced Maureen Alabaster, a member of St Giles where John was the minister for 30 years, who spoke about some of the things that happened during that time. John's wife, Lesley, of course was not forgotten. She has been, and continues to be, a constant support to John. Rev. Bruce Hansen gave a prayer of thanksgiving. John responded with the following words:

**Maureen, Matthew and Bruce.
I drink deeply of your kind words,
words of comfort,
words of care,
blessing words,
words of the holy.**

In my first book I finished each daily reading with a two lines for readers to keep with them through the day. These words still speak to me today. This is a selection which applies to my life and work.

**Every plant and bird and tree
Can be a love-letter from God to me.**

**Everywhere I look I see
Goodness and God's love for me.**

**As I begin another day,
I know you with me, on my way.**

**In good times and bad we are okay,
Living, loving in the Jesus way.**

**In my own heart God's love is warm,
I am okay, sunshine and storm.**

**I've done my bit, I've done my best.
It's okay now for me to rest.**

**When it seemed to be the end,
It has been 'begin again'.**

A hymn written by John was sung, during which many people went forward to greet him. Here's the first verse:

“For summer, autumn, winter, spring
a celebration song I sing
I sing for every season's treasure
each season's gift of love and pleasure.”



Autumn

Autumn time. In Hagley Park it was a beautiful warm day with a gentle stirring of leaves from the fickle breeze that rustled amongst the stand of oak trees near the children's playground.

The leaves were turning colour and some had already fallen to the ground. Late coming baby leaves, middle aged leaves and grand old wrinkly ones still clung to their branches.

It was mid-afternoon on a sunny day when a sudden wind gust blew in from the south. The leaves shook and some old tired wrinkly ones were loosened and fell to the ground but most still clung on to their branches for dear life.

All was quiet again and then whoosh, another gust hit the tree and many more leaves fell down. A few baby ones and lots of middle-aged ones fell. Some leaves were weakened but didn't break off. All was quiet again.

The southerly breeze strengthened and a baby leaf at the top of the tree was flicked off its branch and started floating to the ground. Older leaves were loosened and because they were bigger and heavier, they reached the ground more quickly.

On the way down the little leaf said "Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me" each time it passed a leaf still clinging to its branch. Down, down it floated. "Excuse me, excuse me."

Some of the bigger leaves it passed became unattached and tumbled earthwards as the wee leaf was still wafting its way down.

Eventually, quite exhausted, the little leaf thankfully settled next to an old wrinkly.

"Hey you" said the oldie. "What's with you saying excuse me, excuse me all the way down the tree?"

The little leaf looked at the oldie, a bit scared and hesitantly said "... I... I... I just blew off."

Anon E Mouse

Language in church

It was during the ministry of Bruce Hansen (1985-2001) that we, as a community, became more aware of the importance of inclusive language in our services. Prior to this time, in many churches around Aotearoa New Zealand, it was normal practice for God and the people of God to be described in heavily gendered language. Part of the transition from the narrow and regular vocabulary of "Father", "Lord" and "King" for God, was discovering the wide and rich variety of Biblical names and metaphors for God - although some people wondered at the time what the problem was with the old kind of language. Most were a little easier to persuade, I'm told, when it came to exclusive language about the people of God - man, mankind, sons of God, brethren, brothers, etc. Knox made the transition successfully, and nowadays sexist language jars in our ears.

Similarly, when Geoff King (minister from 2003 to 2012) began using te reo Māori in services, some people wondered why, since, as the old phrase goes, "we had no Māoris here". Yet, Geoff's time at Knox coincided with a time when our country was waking up to some long-forgotten bi-cultural responsibilities that came our way when our nation was founded at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Broadly, in the wider, ecumenical church, it was a time of reclaiming the reformed principles that worship should be contextual, reflecting the local time, place and languages of the people at worship. The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand became the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, and committed itself to a bi-cultural journeying with the people of the then "Māori Synod" (later Te Aka Puaho). Knox saw value in this.

On the Sunday just before Waitangi Day this year, I delivered a sermon based on 1 Corinthians 12: 1-16, where Paul used the image of the human body to describe the new Community of Christ. The metaphor was one of diversity serving a new unity. We reflected on how diversity is not something to be feared or "tolerated", but "cherished" (as our mission statement puts it). God's broad, inclusive love for all people is celebrated as diversity informs our community. Since Waitangi Day was high in my mind (he iwi tahi tatōu), and since I'd just affirmed Paul's principles of Christian inclusiveness, I felt we should move ourselves a bit further on down the bi-cultural road by trying the Lord's Prayer in te reo Māori. The prayer, while unfamiliar to many, received a positive reception; but there was some pushback. In light of the pushback, I thought it sensible to ask the Knox Council for advice.

Council said that the use of te reo Māori in our services is important, and that we should be expanding our use of it. Council members noted that unfamiliarity with language makes some people uncomfortable, so sensitive introduction, with lots of education involved, is both a pastoral and constructive approach. It was decided that (for now) monthly use of the prayer would be good, provided printed translation and other linguistic support is offered.

In keeping with this, having been successful in finding funding, we will be offering free te reo Māori classes at Knox initially for fifteen people*. The classes will include regular practice of the prayer. We also provide the following translation, below, which gives an idea of how the English and Māori versions express the concepts involved (bearing in mind that Jesus would have delivered the original in neither Māori nor English, but in Aramaic).

Council is looking forward to this part of the journey.

Arohanui,

Matthew.

** When dates have been set for the classes (consultation with the tutor still required) we will advertise the classes and call for registrations.*

The Lord's Prayer in te reo Māori, with English equivalents:

**E TO MATOU MATUA I TE RANGI,
KIA TAPU TOU INGOA.
KIA TAE MAI TOU RANGATIRATANGA.**

KIA MEATIA TAU E PAI AI

**KI RUNGA TE WHENUA
KIA RITE ANO KI TO TE RANGI.**

**HOMAI KI A MATOU AIANEI
HE TARO MA MATOU MO TENEI RA.**

**MURUA A MATOU HARA,
ME MATOU HOKI E MURU NEI**

**I O TE HUNGA E HARA ANA KI A
MATOU.**

**AUA HOKI MATOU E KAWEA KIA
WHAKAWAIA;
ENGARI WHAKAORANGIA MATOU I TE
KINO:**

NOU HOKI TE RANGATIRATANGA,

**TE KAHA, ME TE KORORIA,
AKE AKE AKE.
AMINE.**

Our parent in the spirit world,
sacred is your name,
bring us your chiefly rule,

May it happen in the way
that is to you, good,

May it happen on earth
in the same way as in spirit
world.

Give us now
the food we need this day.

Strip us of our sins,
give us back what we have
lost

So that we, the slaves of sin,
may be with You again.

Do not lead us into
temptation,
may we be whole, away from
things evil

Through your chiefly position
is
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen

Living Wage

The Living Wage movement is based on the recognition that a fulfilled life involves people being able to do more than feed and house themselves. We all should be able to enjoy some leisure activities, take part in the activities of our culture and cope with sudden expenditures such as repairing or replacing household appliances.

The Living Wage is calculated as the hourly rate necessary to live as opposed to simply exist. It is calculated for a household of two adults working a total of 60 hours a week who have two dependent children. The calculation is made every year and from September it will be \$26/hour (the legal Minimum Wage is \$22.70/hour). Employers are encouraged to become Living Wage Employers. Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury (Canterbury Regional Council) are Living Wage Employers. A full list of local Living Wage employers can be found at https://www.livingwage.org.nz/accredited_employers. They deserve our support!

Thanks

Linda (and Norman who wrote this)

Upcoming Concert

Hot on the heels of Jubilate Singers' successful God Save the Queen concert, comes a further right royal celebration of music composed for the monarchs of Great Britain. This time, it is to mark the occasion of the coronation of King Charles III. With Christchurch Symphonic Brass - Thomas Eves, Slade Hocking, Barrett Hocking (trumpets) and Karl Margevka, Scott Taitoko, Pablo Ruiz Henao (trombones) - plus, our very own, Jeremy Woodside (organ). The repertoire will be music to the ears of brass lovers, Anglophiles, monarchists and appreciators of outstanding choral compositions alike. Featuring five centuries of music by Morley, Purcell, Handel, Parry, Vaughan Williams, Malcolm Arnold, Walton and more.

Venue: Knox Church, Sunday 30 July 2023 at 2pm.

FAITH, FILM AND FICTION...

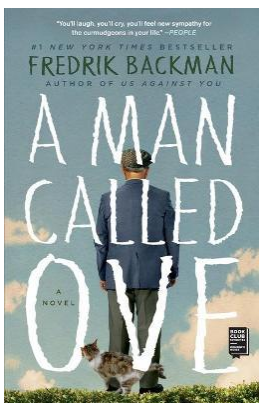
Book Reviews:

From June, the Film Group will move to the last Sunday in the month.

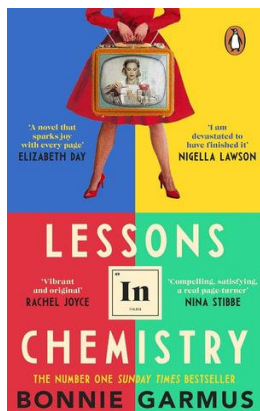
The last Sunday of this month, May 28th, is a wonderful concert at Knox: **Voices New Zealand presents WHEN LIGHT BREAKS at 4pm**. So, in June we will have two films:

Sunday 4th June - 4pm **Where the Crawdads sing** (refer to the September issue of Knox Life for a review of the book on which the film is based).

Sunday 25th June - 4pm **A Man called Otto** (which Hugh Perry introduced us to in his sermon of 12th February).

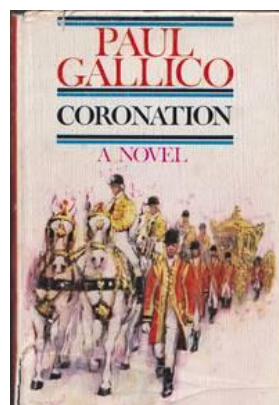


A Man called Ove by Fredrik Backman (published in English 2014). Ove dislikes people and prepares to hang himself. But the rope breaks and the chatty lady next door coaxes him into choosing life. Hugh described the book as a “miracle and sheer delight”. The film adaptation starring Tom Hanks misses some of this but is nonetheless enjoyable and worth watching.



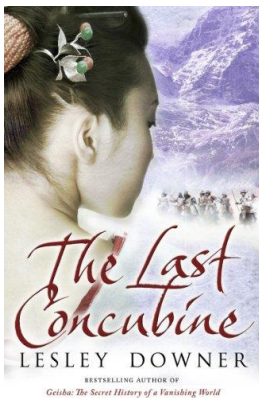
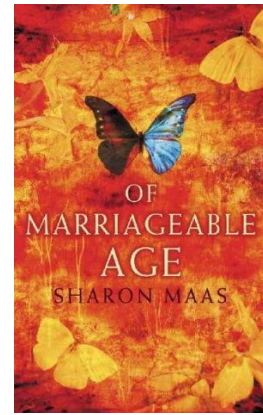
My personal book of the year is **Lessons in Chemistry** by Bonnie Garmus (published 2022). Set in the early 1960s, when female equality at work was a distant dream, Elizabeth Zott, a highly skilled research chemist, loses her job and takes up a cooking show on TV in the 'dead' time slot of 6pm. To the amazement of the males at the TV studio, *Supper at Six*, where Elizabeth explains and demonstrates the chemistry behind her recipes, becomes a raging success. It was also awarded Book of the Year by a huge number of periodicals!

Coronation by Paul Gallico (first published 1962) is a wonderful book about the Clagg family from the north of England who travel to London to watch the Queen's coronation on 2nd June 1953. Sadly, the window seats they had paid for turn out to be a fraud. In the end, thanks to help from various people, they experience unexpected gifts and riches, and return home with great memories. I could not resist mentioning this book, which I am sure you will



enjoy after watching the recent Coronation.

Several Knox folk recommended **Of Marriageable Age** by Sharon Maas (published 1999). There are four main characters whose lives develop and intertwine between the 1940s and 1970s. The settings, which are intimately known to the author, vary between India, British Guyana, and London. The book is unusual, panoramic and memorable, and I strongly endorse the opinions of my reader friends.



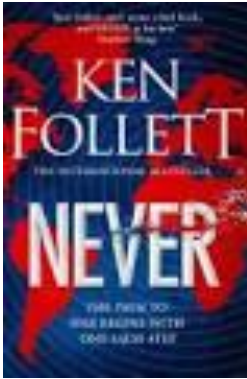
Another excellent book with an unusual setting is **The Last Concubine** by Lesley Downer (published 2008). Also written by someone with a deep understanding of the setting. The book covers the epic era in Japan from 1865 to 1872, as Japan began opening up to the West, amid civil war. The characters are deeply rooted in fact and research and come to life. I highly recommend this book, which is also the time setting of Puccini's wonderful opera **Madame Butterfly**.

As usual I must mention some more outstanding books set in World War II as more and more stories emerge of the huge contribution which women made. These are all thoroughly well researched and based on the true stories of amazing women.

While Paris Slept by Ruth Druart (published 2022)

The Librarian Spy by Madeline Martin (2022)

The Little Wartime Library by Kate Thompson (2022) – this one has photos and there is a memorial in the London Underground to the real Wartime Library.



Finally, I must mention the book by the highly experienced and popular Ken Follett. **Never** (published 2021) could not be more timely, in view of current world events. He discovered while writing his epic novel of World War I, **Fall of Giants**, that none of the participating countries wanted or expected war. Applying this realisation to the modern day, he describes three seemingly small and unrelated incidents: a stolen US army drone, a shrinking oasis in the Sahara, and a secret stash of deadly chemicals. Three main characters try to deal with each threat: a spy working undercover with *jihadis*, a Chinese spymaster, and a female US president. This book is much more than just a thriller – it works through a scenario that we all hope never comes true.

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Knox Church Complex

28 Bealey Avenue, Christchurch 8013

ph. (03) 379 2456, fax (03) 379 2466, office@knoxchurch.co.nz

Office hours: Monday to Friday

9.00am-12.00pm

Minister: Rev. Dr. Matthew Jack

(03) 357 0111, minister@knoxchurch.co.nz

Knox Council Clerk: Janet Wilson (03) 338 7203

Church Office Administrator: Lynda (03) 379 2456

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