



# KNØX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

## Community Newsletter

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**2 February, 2024**

Kia ora Knox Community,

As is the custom now, in some of the months when we don't have a "Knox Life", I send out a community newsletter.

### **How to find peace around national borders**

Recently, someone sent me a link to a speech that Kenya's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mbugua Martin Kimani, made about a year ago. He speaks to the way that African borders often were imposed by people who didn't understand Africa, so are frequently artificial and destructive to genuine "sense of belonging" that people on either side of the borders feel for one another. He speaks also of how African people have, in their best moments, found ways to deal with the border divisions creatively. His speech was part of the United Nations' conversation about Russia and Ukraine, but probably the general principles could speak to other border struggles. One wonders how his ideas might address various situations in the Middle East. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofijY6M-OA8>

### **Feeling Through**

Feeling Through is a short film (18 minutes) made by Doug Roland, following his encounter with a "deaf blind" person late one night on a street in New York City. The deaf blind person was trying to get home, and depended entirely on meeting someone who might understand his situation (without it being conventionally explained). It's a fine study of vulnerability and how positive response to vulnerability can change life. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1CqzntEZZ8>

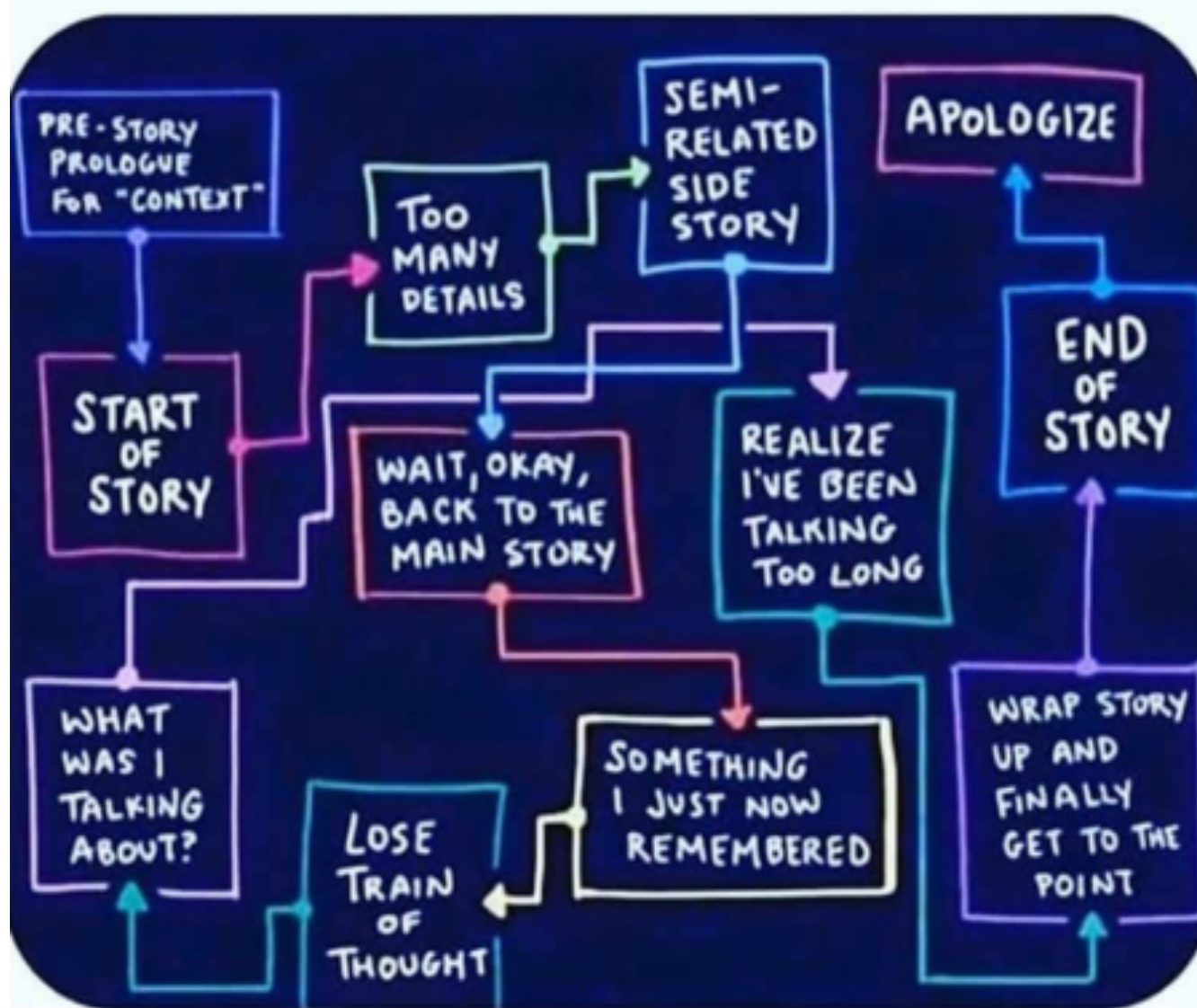
A documentary on the making of the film gives insight into the work of the Helen Keller National Centre in New York. It's worth watching too:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fq-DIHxPEBY>

# How a normal person tells a story



# How I tell a story



I wonder how your conversations work. Quite often, in conversation, I will respond to something I hear by beginning to tell a story which invariably gets diverted, leaving the point I wanted to make unmade and making me look a bit "lateral".



# The Road Not Taken

(Poetry Book: <https://amzn.to/3ZJqZCj> #ad) The Poetry Collection of Robert Frost)

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

ROBERT FROST

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

"The Road Not Taken" is one of Robert Frost's most popular works. Yet, it is a frequently misunderstood poem, often read simply as a poem that champions the idea of "following your own path". Actually, it expresses some irony regarding such an idea. A critique in the Paris Review by David Orr described the misunderstanding this way:

*"The poem's speaker tells us he "shall be telling", at some point in the future, of how he took the road less travelled ... yet he has already admitted that the two paths "equally lay / In leaves" and "the passing there / Had worn them really about the same." So the road he will later call less travelled is actually the road equally travelled. The two roads are interchangeable."*

Frost wrote the poem as a joke for his friend Edward Thomas, who was often indecisive about which route to take when the two went walking. A New York Times book review on Brian Hall's 2008 biography *Fall of Frost* states: "Whichever way they go, they're sure to miss something good on the other path." Regarding the "sigh" that is mentioned in the last stanza, it may be seen as an expression of regret or of satisfaction. However, there is significance in the difference between what the speaker has just said of the two roads, and what he will say in the future. According to Lawrence Thompson, Frost's biographer, as Frost was once about to read the poem, he commented to his audience, "You have to be careful of that one; it's a tricky poem — very tricky", perhaps intending to suggest the poem's ironic possibilities.

Thompson suggests that the poem's narrator is "one who habitually wastes energy in regretting any choice made: belatedly but wistfully he sighs over the attractive alternative rejected." Thompson also says that when introducing the poem in readings, Frost would say that the speaker was based on his friend Thomas. In Frost's words, Thomas was "a person who, whichever road he went, would be sorry he didn't go the other. He was hard on himself that way."

*MJ (ed.) How do we sift that which is to be regretted from that which is not?*

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS GROUP**

2024 looks to be a year of significant political change and possibly much public discourse about various social issues. It has been suggested that Knox's Public Questions group gather to brain-storm what issues might be priorities for us. Let's gather in the Lounge at 11:20am on Sunday 11 February.

## **Covenant - what is it?**

In the Methodist Church, it's common, near the beginning of each year, to hold a "Covenant" service, during which the congregation reflects on the pledged love and unshakeable commitment of God to the community of faith, and pledges in response to offer the gifts and skills of the community to God. It's about recognising God's expression of committed love, and reciprocating with its own love and commitment. (You offer as I offer - we are "in covenant".)

"Covenant" is sometimes misunderstood as "contract". The two are not the same. In a contract, if one partner breaks the commitment, then the other partner is free to walk away. In a covenant, if a partner breaks the commitment, then there is sorrow and forgiveness in the hope of reconciliation. Covenant is commitment made with heart - it is more determined, in relationship, to be self-giving.

The first mention of covenant in the Biblical story is the one that God makes with the world following the great flood. God hangs a rainbow in the sky as a sign that no matter what, never again will God's response to human evil be to obliterate the world. God will find another way. Obliteration is not a tool of love.

The second mention of covenant is the promise that God makes with Abraham and Sarah (who seem alive to God's invitation to explore the world in faith) to bless them with many descendants (as numerous as the stars). Abraham and Sarah prove to be poor keepers of the promise, but in the true spirit of covenant, God finds a way of keeping them engaged.

When Jesus inaugurated the Eucharist (Holy Communion) at the Last Supper, he talked about the wine symbolising the new "covenant" in his blood. He called people to see his life, and the remembering of his life by his people, as a new (and fuller) manifestation of "living the promise that God had made of old".

To this day, people speak of marriage as a covenant - a committed relationship between parties that is founded in love and hope, and that forgives as it needs to. Indeed marriage does not always succeed, but the on-going use of the word "covenant" to describe one of the most important human relationships illustrates the depth, complexity, sometimes poignancy and foundational importance of the idea behind the word. Covenant is aspirational, difficult and basic.

As I read the Bible readings for the Sundays of Lent in 2024, the word "covenant" kept leaping out from the pages. So I am constructing our Lenten season this year around the theme of the "Season of the Covenant". Hopefully the season will give us an opportunity to hear some of the Church's famous covenant stories and to reflect on how each has touched the "hem of garment" of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

## Lent 2024

# Season of the Covenant

18 February - 10:00am

### Lent 1

#### The Rainbow Covenant



Genesis 9: 8-17 - Hanging a rainbow in the sky, God promises to keep the world safe from any further flood.

Mark 1: 9-15 - As chaos threatens to flood the world with mis-use of power, Jesus' resistance of temptation suggests he will be God's keeping of the new covenant.

25 February - 10:00am

### Lent 2

#### Covenant in the Stars



Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16 - God makes a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, promising them that they will be ancestors of a multitude of nations.

Romans 4: 13-25 - Looking back and noting that Abraham's future was secured by faith in the promise of God, Paul rejoices that faith in the resurrection of Jesus is the basis for our covenanted future.



3 March - 10:00am

### **Lent 3 - Communion Covenant in Commandment**



Exodus 20:1-17 - The people are called to express their commitment to the covenant by living a peculiar form of life that is honourable to people and to God.

Jesus puts an end to any suggestion that our peculiar form of life means anything other than love and joy (love summing up the whole of the law and commandments).

10 March - 10:00am

### **Lent 4 Covenant Wobbles**



Numbers 21: 4-9 - A plague of snakes threatens the people's commitment to covenant life, but God finds a strange solution.

Ephesians 2: 1-10 - Paul notes that we, whose hope was dead, were brought back to life through a resurrection that, ostensibly, made no sense. "This is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

17 March - 10:00am

### **Lent 5 Covenant with Heart**



Jeremiah 31: 31-34 - God promises to make a new covenant. Not like the old one, *this* one will be written on the hearts of the people - making God's presence obvious.

John 12: 20-33 - Jesus notes that when the heart gets involved, it's not only deeper, but more costly. "Whoever serves me must follow me" - covenant calls for sacrifice.

24 March - 10:00am

### **Lent 6 - Palm Sunday Walking the Covenant Talk**



After reading the Palm Narrative (Mark 11: 1-11), we do our annual Palm Procession along a short stretch of Bealey Ave.

Isaiah 50: 4-9a - A meditation on what might have moved Jesus on Palm Sunday to "walk the covenant talk", and how he might have seen the depth of the shadows.

28 March - 7:30pm  
**Maundy Thursday - Tenebrae**  
**The Covenant Meal**  
Communion



Exodus 12: 1-14 - The Covenant people are instructed to prepare for the flight from Egypt by celebrating a particular meal.

What kind of life are they being called to as they prepare to leave their homes and begin the great trek to freedom and a new home? As we join them, but moved by Christ's revisionist meal, what do we expect? What is our "covenanted home"?

We end the service with the Litany of the Shadows, during which the light in the church is extinguished.

29 March - 10:00am  
**Good Friday**  
**The Covenant Broken**



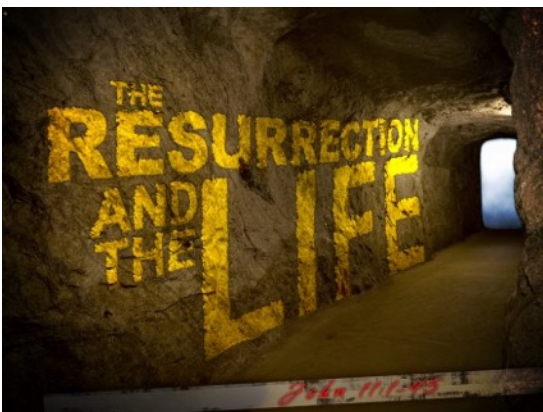
Psalms 22: 1-11 - A reflection on the question "My God, why have you forsaken me", as we consider the death of the Living Covenant Christ. His words speak for all forsaken people.

We read the full Passion Narrative from John's gospel.

## Easter Day 2024

# The Covenant of the Stone rolled away

31 March - 10:00am  
**Easter Day Communion**



The service begins with the reading of Matthew's version of the Resurrection story. As the stone is rolled away, a new promise begins.

Romans 6: 3-11 - As the news of the Resurrection is shared with Jesus' people, God's covenant promise to humanity becomes the eternal, never-dying covenant.

We celebrate communion and sing some great Easter hymns.

## **What would you do?**

You are out in your garden, one January evening, doing some weeding, and hear your neighbours arguing loudly. She invites him to hit her again, so he can see what she'll do. He dares her to ring the police, like she has done before. There are some loud banging noises, which may be the slamming of doors. Then it all goes quiet. What do you do?

The police have two numbers. 105 is for reporting matters that are not of immediate concern. Generally, there's a bit of a wait for these calls to be answered. 111 is for reporting situations where someone is in immediate danger. Given what you have heard from your neighbours, how do you work out whether 105 or 111 is most appropriate?

Do you drop a message in their letter box the next day, offering help to her? Or do you worry that the message, if intercepted by him, will make things worse? Do you know the number of your local Women's Refuge?

## **Material for Knox Life**

If you have any material you think might go well into the next edition of Knox Life, just send it to the office. The deadline for contributions will be advertised through the Sunday notices for a few weeks before the deadline.

*Arohanui, Matthew.*

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