

KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

KNOX LIFE

December 2025



Somewhere in the South Island!!

And on earth, peace among those with whom God is pleased



Johnny is my hairdresser of probably ten years. I think he does a good job; he always asks how my mother is, and insisted, when hearing that she would be visiting Ōtautahi Christchurch, that I bring her into the salon to meet him. His first few years were spent in Guangzhou, just down the road from Zhongshan, my mid-life crisis home in 2010. At the end of each monthly haircut, I tell him that it's the best haircut in Christchurch.

In June I had an appointment to get my hair cut. I was kept waiting for a long time, while Johnny had what sounded like a "squeezed in" consultation with someone who was unhappy about a haircut that had gone on somewhere else. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting, resenting. Still waiting, wondering about priorities, loyalty, presumptions being made. Waiting, feeling angry. At the end of the haircut, I exited the salon without noting the best haircut in Christchurch.

While in receipt of an email apology for poor service (he recognised the error and did what he could to put things right), I decided to have my hair cut somewhere else in July. I did the same in August and September.

In October, I went back, and Johnny told me that he was very pleased to see me. At the end of that day, I noted that the world felt a little less broken than it had in the morning.

It is good when we are at peace.

Shortly before he died, David Lange was interviewed by Tom Scott, the cartoonist / journalist for a documentary called "The Reluctant Revolutionary".

Over the years, Tom had done cartoons of David and sometimes had caused hurt and anger. On a birthday just after David retired, Tom published a cartoon (sending the original to David). The caption was "when we carve our Mount Rushmore", and the picture was of four Lange faces carved into a mountain.



David wrote to Tom "there is kept in my desk, in a scroll, a drawing, Tom. I was surprised to be flattered by it. It was good in itself, but it was better that **you** had done it. It's good to be at peace with people. I even had Mike Moore here a few weeks ago."

It is good when we are at peace.

The angelic song in the story of the birth of Jesus was "and on earth, peace among those with whom God is pleased". [Luke 2: 14b]. It is easy, and entirely theologically responsible to consider Christmas a time of peace and goodwill. The world needs peace. We all know, when relationships are restored, that peace feels right and good.

I'm wondering, though, about the quiet qualification within the angel song. It's not peace "for all". It's peace for those "with whom God is pleased". Is this a gentle reminder that peace might be too far a Christmas prize for those who sell weapons, or make war, or batter their partner? How does peace kiss the cheeks of those who destroy peace? I have no developed theory on that; maybe I simply suggest that Christmas peace is a blessing for those of goodwill, but also a challenge to the practices that hurt our world [Matthew 10:34]. Maybe Christmas is a gift, but also a call.

My Christmas wish for you, as you read this, is that you will know reconciliation with those from whom you have been alienated. May your evening find you more at peace than your morning. And may we all have the courage to offer, to the Christ-child, our determination for a more peaceful expression of life.

It is good when we are at peace.

Arohanui,

Matthew

Church Council Notes

For several years Knox has supported Te Whare Roimata with a weekly collection of food and other household goods to assist people living in the eastern suburbs of Christchurch. There are many people in our city who struggle with the ever-increasing cost of living. Generous people in the congregation bring canned and packaged food, toiletries and sanitary products. Douglas Shaw delivers these donations to the staff at Te Whare who pass them on to those in need.

Each November we also collect goods for Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou - a charity that supports the tamariki and whānau of people in prison or those serving a community-based sentence. They walk alongside whānau, providing wraparound social work, mentoring programmes and youth advocacy. The focus of this collection is Christmas gifts, particularly for children and young people. It is good to see the strong support from members of the congregation.

Whie Matthew enjoyed a well-deserved two week break in October the services were taken by Rev Hugh Perry and Rev Brian Turner. Hugh and Brian are members of the congregation, and we enjoy the insights they offer. Both are in demand by other Christchurch parishes, so we are grateful that they are able to assist Knox when the need arises. Thank you.

A renewal of lease for a further two years has been signed with the Tangata Atumotu Trust. They now use most of the upstairs spaces in the Knox Centre, as well as the downstairs committee room. In addition, they regularly hire the hall, lounge and kitchen for community and social activities. It is good to see our facilities so well used by this group which delivers important services to people.

Jean Brouwer
Knox Church Council Clerk



COMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

Advent and Christmas 2025 – "Towards the new world"

30 Nov	Justice, unity and peace 	ADVENT 1 Isaiah 2:1-5 presents the image of God's holy mountain becoming a beacon for all the nations. Pondering the conflict surrounding the Waiwera Valley, we explore good and bad "mountain building". We sing "Come, O long-expected Jesus".
7 Dec	Deep understanding 	ADVENT 2 In Isaiah 11:1-11, God's servant is described as having a spirit of wisdom and understanding. We imagine a world where we have a deep understanding of our neighbours, and we explore ways of inching towards that. We sing "O come, O come Emmanuel".
14 Dec	The flourishing 	ADVENT 3 In Isaiah 35:1-7, we find some dis-spirited figures on a dry and struggling landscape, and we explore the human realities for which they stand. We then consider the image of the landscape coming to life. We sing "When out of poverty is born a dream that will not die".
21 Dec	Nine Lessons and Carols 	ADVENT 4 Following some well-worn readings that trace humanity's deep spiritual need from the beginning, we sing some favourite carols and enjoy hearing some brand new originals written especially for the occasion.



I have loved you for a long time

A candlelight service
11:15pm, Christmas Eve



Welcome to the new world

10:00am, Christmas Day

Christmas 2025

From the Director of Music

My last music report for Knox Life was back in May and I'd like to reflect on the musical happenings over the past six months.

It was a great pleasure to welcome Deborah Wai Kapohe back to Knox for our Matariki Service in June. The Knox Singers greatly enjoyed working with her on a beautiful arrangement of Hine e Hine by David Hamilton.



A multi-instrumentalist, Deborah, once again, brought along an array of traditional instruments to showcase.

We've been very fortunate to have a number of other visiting musicians too, namely UK/NZ tenor Chris Bowen, who performed some movements of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Resolutions chamber choir from Rangitikei Girls' School, Concordia Cantores from Christ's College and St Margaret's College and of course, Lana Law (saxophone) and Barry Brinson (piano), who greatly enhanced our annual Jazz Communion Service in October.

Recently, we hosted a Hymn-a-thon which was well attended. It was wonderful to have so many of the congregation request hymns that, more often than not, don't make it into Sunday worship. Thanks to Robin Coombes and Ken Shields for suggesting the idea. Hopefully this will become a semi-regular occasion.

The Knox Singers' repertoire (and membership) continues to grow and we have recently sung some wonderful anthems by Haydn, John Rutter and Duke Ellington. I'm delighted that Richard Oswin (former Knox Singers director) has composed a carol for us for this year's Nine Lessons and Carols. Music will also be by John Rutter, Dan Forrest, Benjamin Britten, and James Burt who has revised his piece from last year for strings, as we will be joined by a string quartet of players from the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. It will be a wonderful service, as usual, so do invite your friends and family along – Sunday 21 December at 10am.

As always, a huge thank you to the Singers for their dedication and hard work. Believe it or not, each month we only get three hours of rehearsal time together, so I'm hugely grateful for all the individual practice they dedicate in their own time to get to the standard they are at. I am always on the lookout for tenors, so if you know of any, do send them my way. And of course, a huge thanks to Bronwyn Wiltshire for all her work in organising and maintaining the music library! It is very much appreciated. Thank you too to the wonderful deputy organists who play on Sundays when I need to be away: Russell Kent, Micah Yang and Dr John Linker.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Jeremy Woodside

Please note that the Knox office will be closed from 12pm 23 December, reopening on Tuesday 6 January 2026 at 9am. Services continue through January at 10am each Sunday.



Concordia Cantores
and
Matariki Service



Aqua-Phobia

My wee story really doesn't have a solid connection with Knox, except that it begins when I arrived home after choir practice a couple of weeks ago.

While backing into my driveway I was happily distracted by two beautiful St. Bernards out for their evening stroll. Happily - until the rear of my car connected with the brick wall which runs along the footpath - oops! To be honest, not a great deal of damage was done, a few scratches but the rear light suffered a small hole with cracks radiating from it. Having been told that "they won't give you a WoF if a light is broken" I decided to contact the insurance company to talk about repairs.

The assistant was helpful and said she would contact their fixit people on my behalf. Everything moved very quickly and the next day the assessor, a cheerful young woman, told me that a replacement light would be ordered that night and a courtesy car would be available for me. I said, "Thank you, but I'll take the bus". However, the lass was quite adamant that the courtesy car was "part of the deal". Oh dear! My stomach really hit my shoes when I saw that the car was an Aqua - the most stealable vehicle ever, followed by a nerve-wracking drive home, along Brougham Street at 5pm...

There are a few differences in the technicalities between driving an Aqua and my little Nissan, but my nerves went completely ballistic when it spoke to me - talk about disconcerting and distracting! Following GPS instructions (which you have asked for and expect) i.e. "in 300 metres turn right" is okay, but to have a random voice suddenly tell you to watch your P's and Q's is quite another story. Yes, I did obey with due respect and care when I was told "a round-about is detected, please drive safely", but...

The following day, as I approached quite a major intersection, a car came racing across my bows causing me to brake quite suddenly – my new wee friend told me "A rapid deceleration detected, please drive safely" - as if I needed reminding!

The verbal messages had a "sort of" pattern but I was really gobsmacked when I was told "a railroad crossing is detected, please drive safely." Given the area I was driving through, I knew there were no railway lines for MILES. The sooner my car was repaired, the better!

Mercifully, I was contacted the next morning by the repairers to come and collect my (non-vocal) car - what relief! I couldn't hand over the Aqua's keys quickly enough.

The moral of the story when driving (reversing) - don't be distracted by St. Bernards no matter how beautiful they are (nor any other beautiful creatures for that matter), especially if there's a brick wall nearby.

June

Reverend Don Reekie

We are privileged to have Don in our congregation and to mark 65 years since his ordination, he generously supplied the congregation with a special morning tea following the morning service. It was a great joy to congratulate Don and hear about his achievements. The Alpine Presbytery published the following item in their newsletter.

“Rev. Don Reekie, who turned 90 in June, recently celebrated 65 years since his ordination by leading worship in St Ninian’s Presbyterian Church, Riccarton. As the theme for his service, Don chose “Thomas, the Doubter” and spoke about how our commitment to Christianity grows stronger through questioning. Don was a lay-preacher and Sunday School teacher at 14 and had two weekend parishes during Theological training; first a mining village, second as an assistant to a senior. In 1960, Don was ordained in a Congregational Church in England. His first full parish was in a new housing area in Suffolk, where he was the only minister and worked with an ecumenical congregation. In 1965, he and his wife, Gwen, moved to Niue Island. Many Pacific Island churches were founded as Congregational churches. Don nurtured the Church's independence as they wrote their Constitution, then lived it. Briefly, he was the World Mission Board Representative in the Cook Islands and Chair of the Pacific Conference of Churches Communications and Christian Education. (Pacifica churches in New Zealand were received into the Presbyterian Church of NZ, as it was called then, in the late 60’s.)

Rev. Don Reekie was received into the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in 1973 and completed his chaplaincy training in Christchurch that year with Rev Ian Wilson, when Rev. John Murray was minister at Knox. He then dedicated almost 18 years to working for Presbyterian Support Northern. Concurrently, he was active in the South Auckland Presbytery, serving at one point as its moderator. His chaplaincy work began at Kingseat Hospital, where he served as a Psychiatric Hospital Chaplain ministering to both acute and geriatric patients. Following this, he worked in a church's Community House in Manukau City centre. Finally, he moved to a central city base where his focus shifted to training and supporting both ministers and lay people in the counselling, helping, and healing occupations for all churches and the wider community. When

Presbyterian Support decided to concentrate on community services, Don and colleagues founded an independent Institute to continue the work they were doing. The presbytery proposed emeritus status, and so Don has been emeritus since the age of 55. Don retired in 2003 to come to Christchurch with Gwen to be close to daughter and grandchildren - having five months each year for ten years in Queensland with son and grandchildren there. Don is a valued member of both St Ninian's and Knox churches, where he has occasionally led worship."

Churchspeak for beginners No. 2

A glossary of churchspeak terms for those people new to our churches who do not understand the churchspeak in which we talk.

PCC Minutes

Churchspeak	English
A wide-ranging discussion...	A lot of waffle
A full and frank discussion ...	A punch up
Helpful comment ...	Unhelpful comment
Interesting view ...	Daft idea
Respectfully suggested ...	Disrespectfully suggested
There was a general consensus ...	None of those still awake could be bothered to argue
Important matter ...	Unimportant matter
It was agreed to defer consideration of the matter ...	There was no chance of any agreement
... and set up a subcommittee to look at the issue ...	... and civil war was about to break out

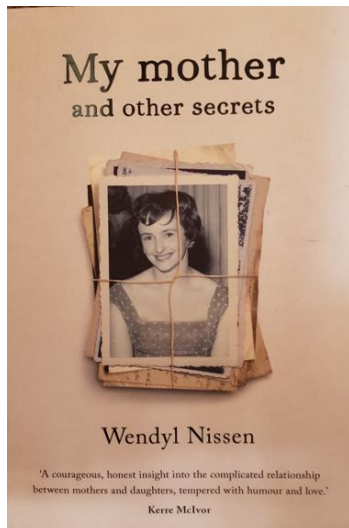
The Diocese of Guildford Herald

Published in Knox Life, August 1991



Book Reviews

And now for your summer reading... This time the books feature inspiring New Zealanders.

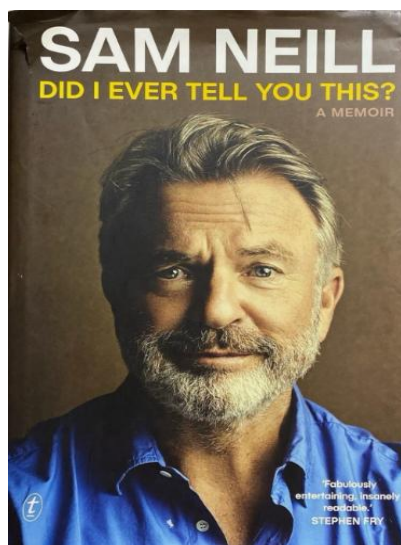


Wendyl Nissen is a well-known NZ journalist who edited several high-profile magazines then left the corporate world twenty years ago and has written several books about green living. In **My Mother and other secrets** (2021) she depicts her mother's suffering with Alzheimer's and various family stories that were eventually revealed. Wendyl discovered new relatives, adoptions, parenting issues, and complex marriages. This book is compelling and well-written. It also includes suggestions for people caring for someone with dementia. Her sympathetic story resounds with humour and love.

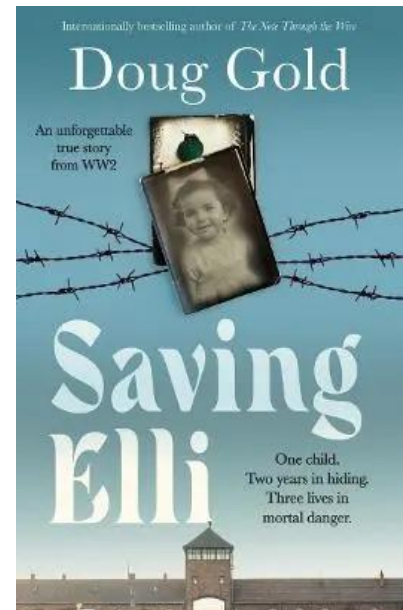
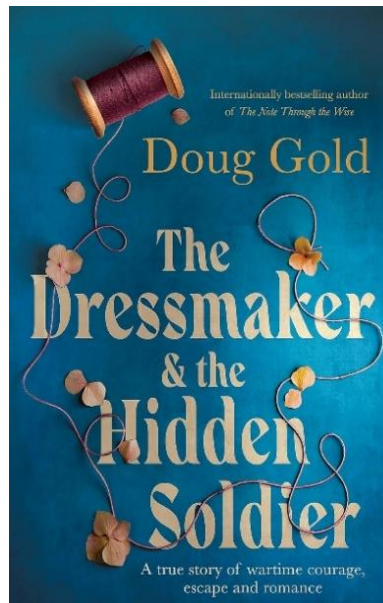
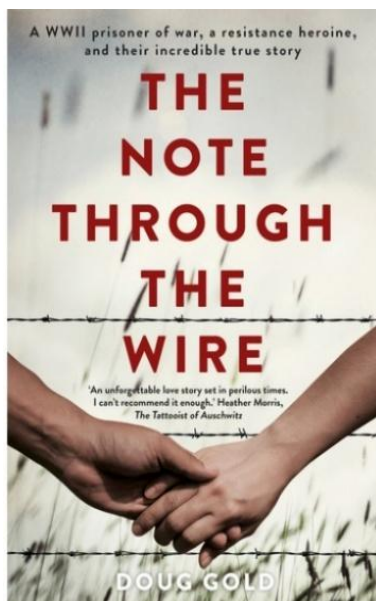
Alison Mau: No Words for This (2025)
You probably remember Alison Mau and Simon Dallow who used to bring us the TVNZ News each night? Well... they were married for many years and have two children. Alison's memoir book is very well written and covers many aspects of her life, as well as great insight behind the scenes of daily news broadcasting. It is certainly worth reading.



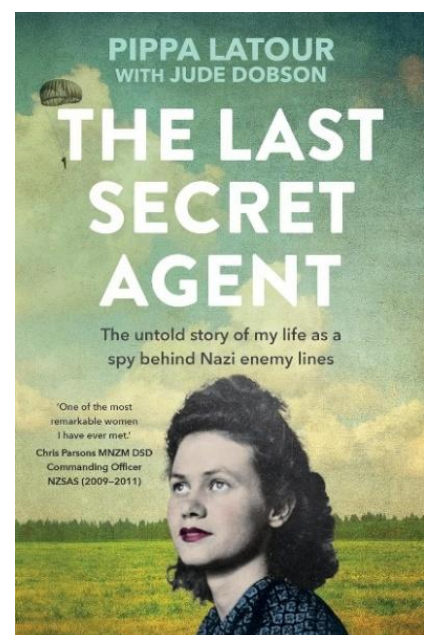
Sam Neill: Did I Ever Tell You This? (2023)
This memoir by our beloved and talented Sam Neill is both modest and entertaining. Did you know that his birth name is Nigel? When he was an eleven-year-old student at Christ's College he and his lifelong friend, also Nigel, called each other Sam and Bill. This book, much of it written while Sam Neill was undergoing cancer treatment, is moving and very funny.



Doug Gold is a highly experienced and New Zealand media specialist who became fascinated by the life story of his mother-in-law, Josefine Lobnik. During World War II she was a Yugoslav partisan heroine who married a New Zealand soldier, Bruce Murray. His first book, **The Note through the Wire** (2019) tells their incredible story. Since then, he has written two more true stories of brave Kiwis and the love that they found despite terrible odds: **The Dressmaker and the Hidden Soldier** (2023) and most recently **Saving Elli** (2025). Three stories of people who risked everything to save others. They are books that I always treasure. You can also find fascinating interviews with Doug Gold online.



In 2017 the French Ambassador presented the *Brevet Militaire du Parachutiste* to Pippa Latour in honour of her work as the last secret agent to be parachuted into Occupied France in 1944. She had already been highly decorated for her outstanding work as a secret agent. Jude Dobson had heard about this amazing person and was honoured when Pippa agreed to tell her story. She died in 2023 at age 102 and now her story will live on.



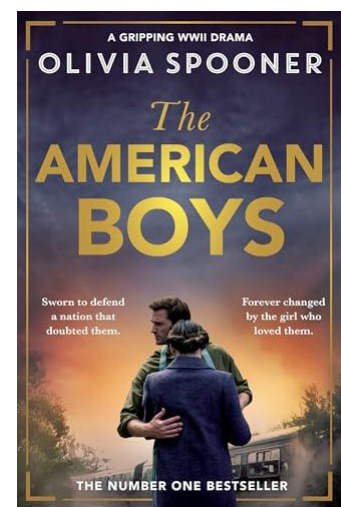
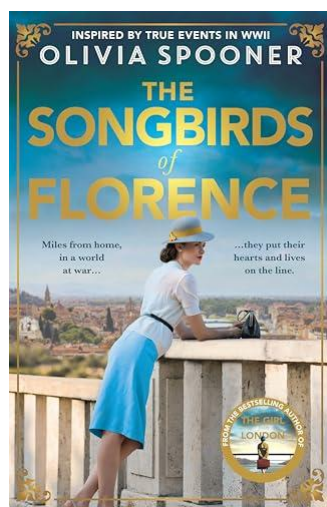
Now for some fiction based on fact, also from New Zealand.

Olivia Spooner has become one of my very favourite writers. She lives in Auckland and until recently ran a very successful bookshop. After two contemporary novels, she has turned to historical fiction – and highly successfully.

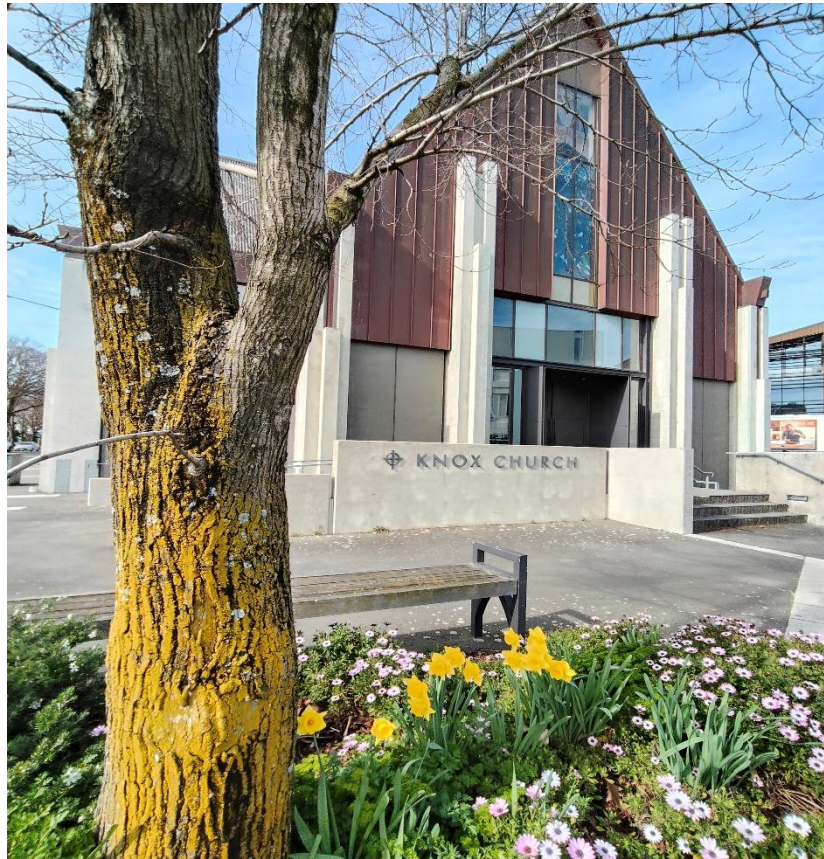
The Girl from London (2023) is her first in the historical fiction genre. In 1940 the ship *Rangitane* leaves from London to evacuate children to Australia and New Zealand. Ruth, a young schoolteacher, is one of the accompanying adults. En route the ship is attacked by German raiders and the survivors are taken prisoner. Fast forward to New Zealand 2005 when Hazel boards a plane to London to try to discover Ruth's story.

Her second book **The Songbirds of Florence** (2024) especially resonated with me because it brought to life, for the first time in my years of reading, the experiences of my father in the desert (Long Range Desert Group) during World War II. Two young women, Margot and Addy, join the Tuis as part of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, set up to look after the men returning from battle. They continue with them from Egypt to Italy. My father, as with most of the men of the day, did not talk much about the war (except among themselves at the RSA or Officers' Club) but the place names in this thoroughly researched book seemed so familiar.

The third book by Olivia Spooner, **The American Boys** (2025) has just been published. It deals with the influx of 'Yanks' into Wellington. I am very much looking forward to reading it, especially because I heard so much about that era from my mother, who lived in Wellington at that time.



Knox Church values the support of all who are involved in our community's life. Knox Church is a charity. All charitable donations are eligible for a tax rebate of 33%. Bank account - 03 1705 0029641 00. Put your name in the reference field and email your contact details to the office. For further information or options contact: office@knoxchurch.co.nz ph: 379 2456.



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