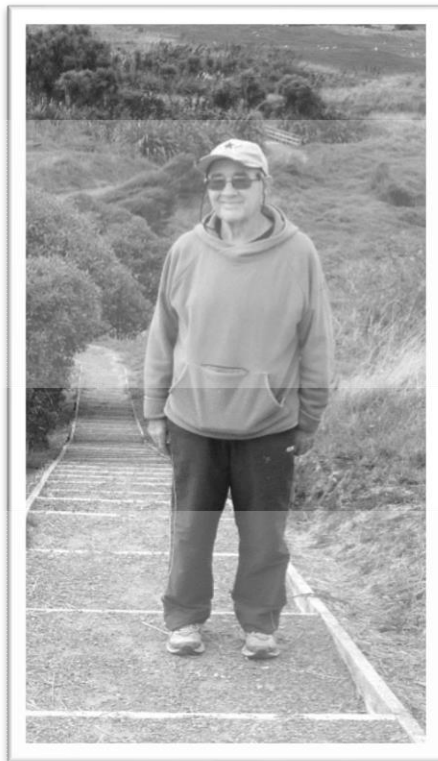


A HUSBAND, FATHER
and GRANDFATHER



The latter life and times of

BERNIE TOWNSEND

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Bernie Townsend

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Signpost at Bluff

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PART 1

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND HIS STORY

Bernie Townsend is a retired Public Servant, a Chartered Accountant, with significant years of service in finance and financial systems of central Government; the Treasury, Social Welfare, Education and Housing. He was an elder of Gateway Christian Fellowship - a small Pentecostal church in Paraparaumu which has since closed down.

He has been accredited Master of Theology through Laidlaw College. His research and dissertation work was based on the Christian life and values of CMS Missionary, Octavius Hadfield who operated in the Otaki region. It is an original work and represents a new view of the life of this pioneer New Zealander from a Christian view. Bernie suggests that the foundations which Hadfield laid in the Kapiti region are relevant for contemporary church members to embrace and build upon. This and other (sermon related) material from Bernie can be found at <http://townsendnz.yolasite.com>.

This current writing is about Bernie and his wife Dawn's planned holiday trip around places in the South Island of New Zealand and the trauma that arose towards the end of that holiday, and beyond. It contains good material of the places visited, the tracks explored, and provision of God on the trip and the traumatic consequences for both Bernie and Dawn. It is written by both Bernie and to a lesser extent Dawn, as appropriate. This gives the reader both a feminine and male view of some events, whilst others are written with the other party (usually Bernie) under anaesthetic. Dawn, his wife of 57 years, comes closest to really knowing the painful journey this turned out to be. Her love and support were freely given without measure.



Because of God's love for Dawn and Bernie and God's plans for both beyond the South Island, Bernie has a story to share with you. Holy Spirit, be pleased with the telling of this story and bless many people through it. After the surgery and subsequent episodes, it has been like Bernie had a second go at life. This has affected his attitude; he wakes up every morning, so thankful to God for the day ahead. This is a new way of living life and viewing people.

Bernie & Dawn, 2019

THE SIGHTSEEING AND ADVENTURE - A Good Time

Preparation and Beginning

On 28th January, Dawn and I said goodbye to Wellington, and travelled on the Bluebridge to Picton. We had planned and prepared for a five week tour of the South island, camping and tramping, commencing the West Coast of the South Island and Stewart Island. There was no fixed itinerary.

As our devotions with God for the trip and for His purposes on the trip, Dawn and I recited and reflected together on two chapters of the New Testament progressively. We prayed the readings twice a day for two days, then on to the next two chapters. As we left we were on Chapter 6 of Luke.

I was fairly fit for my age, walked 2-3 hours every second day and biked every other day. I reported to the nurse in a medical before we left that I was having light-headed dizzy spells. I was also tired and slept during the day more than usual. Apparently I had reported to the nurse that I was short of breath.

Blenheim

We stayed in Blenheim with Maureen (Dawn's sister) and Lindsay for three days. I enjoyed a good game of golf with Lindsay; not good golf, but good company. We travelled around the course on a golf cart. I took my golf clubs on the trip because I wanted to play a round at Balmacewan course in Dunedin. This was where I caddied and hunted for balls in the weekends when I was 11-13 years.

Westport

On the Sunday we took leave of Maureen and Lindsay and set off to the West Coast. Thanks for your hospitality, love and support. Pity we don't keep closer as families.

Travelling through the Buller Gorge, I tentatively walked across the swing bridge. The walk ended up in a lovely native tree reserve, alive with singing birds.



We stayed in Westport in a cabin, not far from the beach. Next day we travelled on a country road along the rugged coastline and through a forest to Karamea – as far north up the coast as the road goes. There we walked for half an hour along the start of the Heaphy track.

On returning from Karamea, we called into the Denniston Mine Complex and viewed all of the history and relics associated with earlier coal mining operations.

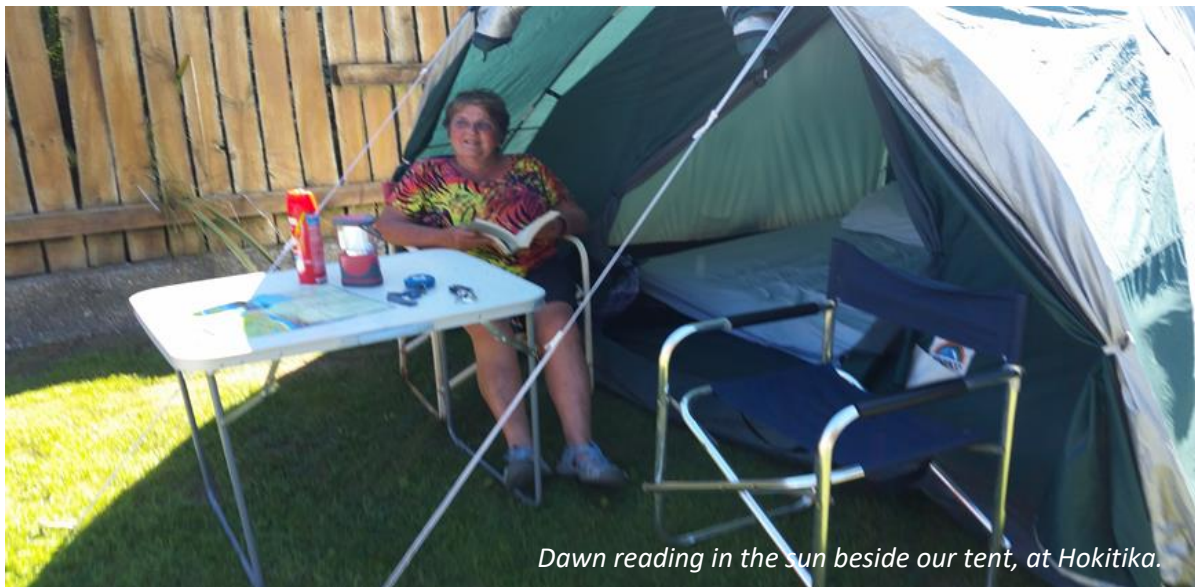
Hokitika

We left Westport and travelled down the coast. We stopped at Panakeke Rocks to view the blow holes. Our previous trip to the rocks with son Phillip was washed out with heavy rain.

We pitched our tent just north of the township of Hokitika, by the rail lines. If I remember right, a train went past during the night. After we had got setup, we went along the township and to the beach to view the beach carvings. The local paper had organised a competition for the locals. Some remarkable entries here!



Beach Carvings



Dawn reading in the sun beside our tent, at Hokitika.

The next day we went for a walk along the tree tops. This was a walkway some 50 metres above the ground. We saw and heard birds and discovered a native orchid in bloom. It was a plant of *Erina Autumnalis* with very small and copious white flowers.

We walked through a track on farm land which was not pleasant, nothing to see and very exposed, then we travelled up the Hokitika gorge. There we walked through the forest to the Hokitika River where Dawn had a swim. Very cold water apparently; the water was milky blue from the mountain tops and the lime cliffs.

We then had a scenic drive around Lake Kaniere, where the native reserve ventured right down to the lake edge almost (but not quite) engulfing the road.



Tree top walk in Hokitika.

We had a really memorable time in Hokitika walking amongst the trees and rivers, as they were when our ancestors first explored the country. So much of God's hand in the area.

I was tired and slept more than usual during the day before and after the walks, and during the walks I was slower than usual and short of breath.

Franz Joseph

From Hokitika we travelled down the coast and then inland to Franz Joseph. We stayed in a cabin just out of town. There we had the only day's rain, heavy, so we couldn't travel up the glaciers as the roads and tracks were dangerous. A session in the local swimming pool would cost \$26 each, which we declined.

We arranged to go to Wanaka a day early. I booked a camp site through Top 10 which we joined before we left. This enabled us to book ahead as we travelled. It gave us discounts, and almost guaranteed a cabin or camp site. We were pleased at the friendly staff and the neat and tidy facilities in all of the Top 10s.



*Rain Clouds and
Camper Vans,
Franz Joseph*

Wanaka

We travelled through the Haast Pass, such a beautiful scenic trip and good roads too. We pitched the tent and settled in for a couple of days.

The walk to Wanaka Township was about 20 minutes. We sat along the lakeside and took in the surroundings. Later on Dawn had a swim. We walked along the town end of the lake and returned to camp. We went wine-tasting across from the camp before dinner. Most evenings we cooled off in the pools before retiring to our sleeping bags and air mattresses.

Wanaka was peaceful, no commercial hype, a place to stay and relax and enjoy. There were beautiful hills surrounding the camping ground. Also, there were lots of walking tracks and scenic trips. I went to the golf driving range where I loosened my shoulders and gave my clubs some exercise. Dawn learnt and practised some archery. These activities were catered for out by the airport which was busy with parachutists floating to the ground.

Queenstown

The next day we lifted our tent and packed the car and started on the journey to Queenstown. It was beautiful travelling through the peaceful Cardrona Valley. Then we drove up the Crown range. This was a winding road and we climbed high up the range.

At the top, the motor in the car was quite hot from the climb. We were on the highest road in New Zealand. We stopped at the top for a view down the Cromwell gorge. For the first time, I was unable to walk up to the top of the range for a view. The walk was steep but I was not feeling up to it, strength wise. I had a shortage of oxygen and breath, for the first time.

We went on down to Queenstown and pitched our tent in the camping ground located under the gondola. Our tent site was half a kilometre from the kitchen and the toilets. We were located amongst 300 other campers.

In Queenstown we walked around the very commercial main street. We also walked along the water front. We enjoyed a boat trip around the top end of the lake and along Frankton Arm. I played 9-holes of golf at Frankton, and purchased a newish No.1 driver suited for my style of swing. We drove along Frankton Arm to deer park heights, and looked for signs of early McKersey among the baches. Dawn's parents had a family bach on Frankton Arm in their early days and we, as a young family, joined them at it in our early days.

The next day we went to Glenorchy, close to the start of the Routeburn Track. On returning to Queenstown, Dawn had a swim in the lake and we had afternoon tea at a place which grew native plants, including a plethora of Tiger Lilies (not native).



Dawn swimming in Lake Wakatipu, with Glenorchy in the background.

Invercargill

We travelled next down through Central Otago and Southland to Top 10 located just outside of Invercargill. We stayed there in a cabin.

We drove around Invercargill and had afternoon tea at Bluff, where we made final arrangements for our trip across Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island. In Bluff we also verified the availability and reliability of long-term parking.

Stewart Island

Our trip in the boat across Foveaux Strait was peaceful and calm. The pilot was very friendly and talked with us about his life as a mariner and his upbringing on the Island.

A friendly and helpful person was at the wharf to take us and our belongings to the Lodge. It was a beautiful motel on the hill, and our bedroom looked out over the bay.

That morning we travelled on a charter around the bays of Oban, learning of the history of Stewart Island. We walked a short distance around Ulva Island.

That afternoon we were led on a walk along Fern Gully. It was so very interesting viewing all of the ferns and lichen in the gully. We had lovely fresh Bluff oysters for dinner at the local hotel.

The next morning, while Dawn did a bus tour of the island, I spent three hours on a boat catching blue cod. We anchored about 20 minutes out from the bay, and the six guests continuously pulled in the fish. We left with 2kg of fillets each.



Bernie with a blue cod he caught.

That afternoon we walked around the town, then I went for a sleep as I was tired just from the hot weather and the activity we had both recently undertaken. It was not usual for me to have a “granny nap” in the middle of the day. Dawn went for a walk to the lighthouse on her own.

On the last morning, we went to Ulva Island where we walked around and across the island. Good walking tracks, well-marked.

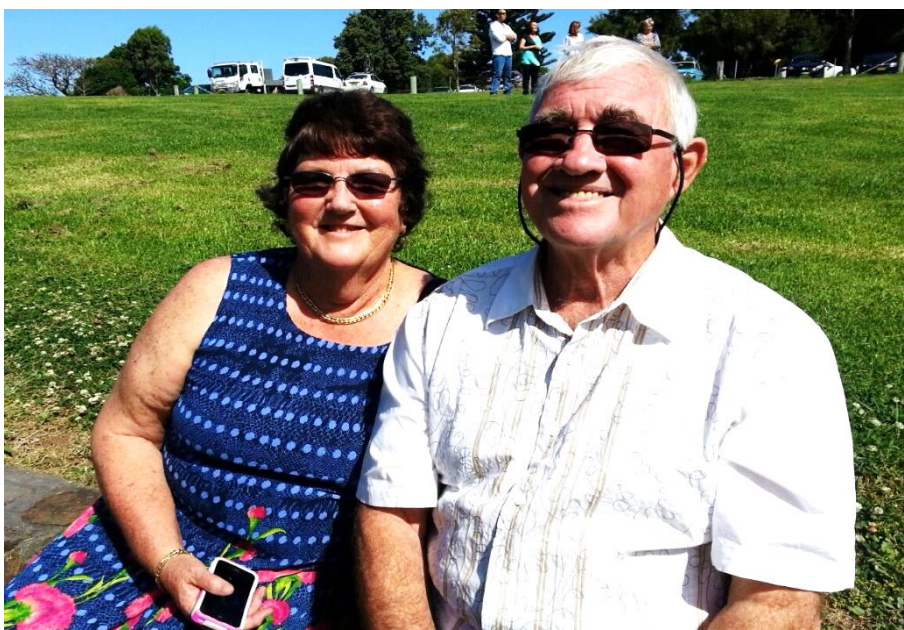
I loved the smell of the native brush, growing down to the track and in fact the water’s edge. There was Matagouri,

Manuka, broad-leaf and other trees and plants of the native bush. I got excited at the clumps of native orchid *Erina Autumnalis*, many native orchid clumps were in flower and were highly perfumed.

After returning on the boat from Ulva, our bags were delivered to the ferry terminal. We returned by boat to the main island but the taxi to return us to the terminal did not arrive, so we started to walk/jog up the hill to catch the ferry to return to Bluff.

I could not walk up the hill. Only five paces and I had to stop and bend over for breath - not asthma breathlessness (which is exhaling usually), but I had to stop and bend right over to inhale. I was very short of breath, and it was difficult for me to breathe and to walk (something was going on in my system and I was not that at time fully aware of it). Dawn stopped two people in a van and they kindly gave us a lift to the ferry terminal.

We were heading back to the mainland, Bluff and camping ground in Invercargill! I did the washing and drying while Dawn made the dinner. We went to bed in the cabin early as we were expecting a big day in the Catlins next!



Relaxing and together!

THE INFIRMITY AND TREATMENT – Life Preservation

John 17 - Jesus Prays for All Believers

25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you[e] known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

1 John 3:24 - Jesus' Love for His People

24 "The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us."

I place these two scripture verses in the front of this section because the details that follow are the result of Jesus Himself existing intimately inside of me, as one of His people. The story demonstrates Holy Spirit talking, sharing, and protecting me for His own purposes, yet to be revealed.

Awareness Assessment – Invercargill

Doing What He says .. Divine Revelation

We went to bed reasonably early as we had a big day ahead. I awoke just after midnight with a slight pain in my left chest. Despite lying and moving my shoulder and arms and lying on my other side, the pain (cramp?) never subsided.

Holy Spirit said to me that the pain was my heart, Invercargill hospital was reputable and not busy at that time of night. He added that I should wake Dawn and get her to take me to the hospital for a check-up. I knew it wasn't my dreams or thoughts; it came from deep inside of me, the voice from behind my navel. When you live and move in the supernatural, you are familiar with the Holy Spirit. I know His voice! I am His workmanship, a stanza in His poem of creation and life and victory! (My reflection and meditation.) Not unusual to hear his voice. Holy Spirit had been with us all down the west coast of the South Island.

Dawn promptly woke, got dressed and we drove along Invercargill main street. After we found the hospital, and gained admission despite a series of forms with duplicate information to be completed, I was finally in A&E. After initial tests, the registrars arrived and the chief nurse. Tested further, suggested that I was having a heart attack, and administered something to thin my blood. They undertook further detailed tests of my heart and circulation and sent the results to Dunedin.

The medical conclusion was that some of my heart arteries were narrow or blocked and that I might need some specialist analysis and treatment by way of surgery. After discussions with Dunedin Health Board, it was decided to admit me into the public health system and send me to Dunedin for treatment. They spoke to Dawn and I about the issue and their solution, and so we waited for the arrival of a helicopter and specialist staff to transport me to Dunedin Hospital. From that moment on I was no longer my own person with a say in my destiny. I was DHB property, with food, medication, accommodation provided for me at the will and control of DHB! Compliance: this was my lot until I was dismissed on 16 March 2016. It took me quite a while to realise that I was a patient, I was sick, and in need of treatment. Major battle waging in my mind!



Tied up for testing, analysis and ready for helicopter trip.

Being loaded into rear of the helicopter.



As I was packed into the helicopter ambulance, the Holy Spirit said to me, *"Daily you have prayed and interceded for each of your children, their partners, grandchildren and their well-being; now it is time for them to pray and intercede with Me for you"*. I lay strapped into the helicopter, looking only at the rivets on the ceiling just above my nose.

Meanwhile Dawn went back to the Top 10 Cabin for rest, to pack our gear, and drive to Dunedin.

Analysis – Dunedin – Home of my Birth ... and Rebirth

As soon as the helicopter arrived on the top of the hospital block, I was rushed from the helicopter into a theatre.

The nurses and doctors who transported me from the roof then swabbed me down, rested me under the big lights in theatre, and stretched out my right hand. My hand was tied down near my wrist and the doctor inserted a needle in my arm. This went into my artery and sent dye up the arm and into my heart. There the consultant was able to see and assess the various blood flows through and around my heart, and the work of the valves within my heart. As part of this comprehensive angiogram, the surgeon accidentally pierced the side of my artery, just above my wrist. Repairing this damage would feature later in my preparation for heart surgery in Wellington. Now they knew what my difficulty was and were prepared to treat my infirmity as soon as the consultant could talk with Dawn and I.

I waited until a very tired Dawn arrived that afternoon from Invercargill. The consulting physician outlined for Dawn and I details of the narrowing of the four arteries and dysfunction of the aorta valve. She indicated that the arteries were too close to the heart itself to take a stent or enlargement. She recommended four bypass grafts and a replaced valve. She noted that only minor damage had been done to the heart itself, and that it was beating strongly and with the blood thinning from Invercargill, things had settled down. She indicated that this surgery could be done in either Dunedin (4 days) or Wellington. Her explanation of the situation and the surgical needs was very clear. We saw the gravity of the situation for me going forward. After discussion, we decided to have the surgery in Wellington, close to our home and support.

Dunedin

This was the place of my birth (Redrufs Maternity Home), region of my education “Christian Brothers or Christies” on Rattray St, place of our marriage (St. Patrick’s Cathedral), Balmacewan Golf Course, Lookout Point home of my sister Raewyn, Caversham home of Cathy and Graham (Dawn’s sister and brother-in-law).

The accommodation in Dunedin hospital was old, the views out the window were great and reminded me of my own early days in Dunedin. Some places which were special to me included:

- Octagon – where I entered the bus each night on the way home from school
- Moray Place – went to the baths weekly as a learn to swim school activity and Wakari Swimming Club, and Moray Place where my dad had his Chartered Accountant’s office
- St. Joseph’s Cathedral – where our school attended mass, communion and confession each month
- Robin Hood - scenic reserve where our school army cadets practised guerrilla warfare
- First Church, Queens Gardens – where I met Dawn after work when we were courting
- Railway Station – where I boarded and left the train for home at Mosgiel before and after work each day
- Wharf - where I and other school mates fished
- Anderson’s Bay – where we lived in our final days in Dunedin

- South Dunedin – St. Patrick’s Cathedral where Dawn and I were married
- Waverley
- Otago University – where I studied in 1960 and again my Masters 2011
- Football Stadium, University Oval, Union Grounds – where I played football with school mates in weekends

The nurses in the ward in Dunedin hospital were extraordinary and the meals satisfactory. I had two “hypos” with very low blood sugar while in Dunedin. An early indication of subsequent blood sugar levels in my body and resultant Insulin to cope.

I would remain in Dunedin hospital until a bed was available for me in Wellington.



Getting the news of the extent of damage and surgery options in Dunedin – pensive mood. Albatross picture behind us.

I was visited by my sister Raewyn. She and I talked and shared, and prayed, and talked, and laughed. There is something refreshing and precious about resuming relationships with family, on a personal level. We laughed and cried into the predicament I was in. We prayed and we both enjoyed Jesus in our midst: *"It is well with my soul"*. I think we joined with dad, mum, and our three deceased siblings on a spiritual level for a moment in time. I was also visited by Cathy (Dawn's sister) and Graham. They were both very supportive of our situation and helped me a lot to get on with things.

My eldest son Phillip and his wife Sharon came to Dunedin from Christchurch and spent time in hospital discussing life and things with me. Our discussion was precious for me. We shared life's walks, life's experiences, and memories. Respect for both of us and our values resulted. My daughter Jacky came down from Auckland and she also spent valuable time talking with me in hospital and being a great help and support for Dawn and I.

Preparation – Dunedin, Wellington – Surgery inevitable

I remained in a room shared with three other men. One man, Joe, was an old boy of Christian Brothers, my school. He was very sick. His family all came in to spend time with him, and I overheard the doctor talk of the grievousness of his ailing body. In one of my discussions with Joe, I talked with him about repentance for life's mistakes, errors, and omissions. He nodded and at the end he said "sorry". Then he followed this up with his head bowed as he said out loud (and embraced) the name "Jesus".

The staff of the ward spent a lot of time preparing me for surgery in Wellington. This included pills, bathing, shaving, the lot. I think the expectation was that I might go straight into surgery in Wellington, or at least shortly after arrival. I also had a pre-operation teeth examination at Otago Dental School. When I left Joe and the group and the ward to fly to Wellington on the Jet Ambulance, Joe bid me farewell with these words, *"I expect to be up there before you Bernie. I'll prepare a place by the throne room for you. See you there!"*

We flew to Wellington in forty minutes. The plane had returned some children from Starship Auckland to Invercargill and had stopped for me on its return flight through Wellington.



Bernie with Pilot and ICU Nurse at Dunedin Airport, Jet Ambulance to Wellington

Surgery – Wellington, Christchurch – In Specialist’s Hands

Appropriate to mention here the role of our youngest daughter Hannah, in Arizona, America. She rang in and checked with me each morning. Being a nurse, she also listened to and supported Dawn. She also had a prayer team in Arizona interceding with God for my well-being. I went by ambulance to and from the airports.

As soon as I arrived at Wellington Hospital I was swabbed for the presence of infectious diseases. I had a room with an ensuite in Ward 6, South Pod, F13. The room had a view of the other wings of the hospital.

I had a restful time for two weeks in Ward 6. I walked around the ward every hour, talked to people, and prayed. I was visited every second day by the Catholic Chaplain (with prayer and communion). I was also visited regularly by the Anglican Chaplain, Don Rangi. Don was a workmate of mine back in the Treasury days, so we had lots of things and people to talk about. I left Don a copy of my book on Hadfield.

Some people went out of their way to come and visit me in Wellington, more notable were; Margaret Hatti – Kapiti walking group, John Apperley – old family friend, Margaret and Peter Dawson – previous church friends, Merv Monk- current friend and confident, and my little sister Marilyn. All prayed and shared their best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery. One special visiting couple was Brett and Trish McAuley. We were friends thirty years earlier in charismatic church groups in Upper Hutt. Brett showed me the stitches in his chest from a bypass thirty years ago! That was so much encouragement for me.

While awaiting my turn for heart surgery, I had minor surgery on my right arm where the angiogram had pierced the artery wall.

I spent quality time with son Matthew. We talked and shared our life’s values. A new respect developed for both of us. I am so proud of my children. We watched the rugby one evening in the patients lounge. Matt’s wife Sarah was also a constant visitor. She was especially helpful for Dawn as she knew the process, the procedures, and the language. She is an ICU nurse at Wellington Hospital.

Dawn used three different methods of transport to get from our home in Paraparaumu to visit; she drove in (parking and fees!), she came in the train and bus – using the gold card, and she came and returned on the shuttle from Kenepuru - Porirua. Dawn and I talked and shared about the situation, how it was affecting us both, and what the future might hold. Of course we prayed and tried to listen to what Holy Spirit was saying; either He was silent, or we were deaf. We had meetings with the surgeon, and the anaesthetist.



Dawn waiting outside Ward 6, Wellington Hospital

For me, the surgery was a necessity, one I had to go through and recover from. In my mind I likened it to the necessity of getting a driver's licence (tests - theory and practical) before being able to drive the car around.

On Thursday I went to Wellington Dental to have my teeth cleaned before the operation. I had a good night's sleep, a walk around the ward and shave all over, then at 8.30 am on Friday 4 March I was taken to the operating theatre.

After goodbyes, hugs and kisses, I put my life into God's hands (into Your hands I commit my spirit) and I fell asleep ready for wake up in Wellington about lunch time with a renewed heart!

Recovery – Christchurch, Wellington – Now a Reconditioned Heart



Strapped up, connected and anaesthetised for trip to Christchurch



I awoke to the sound of Dawn's voice and her soft touch on my arm. Phil was also beside her. She said it was 11.00am on Saturday, and I was in Christchurch!

I did spend a further three hours in the decompression chamber while still awake. It was very compressed and tight. It was like a heavy force over my face and eyes. A heavy weight, like a fat person, seemed to be sitting on my chest holding it down. I was accompanied in the chamber by a doctor. It was a relief to come out.

Well, the intermediary story is Dawn's to tell. I was asleep all through it.

Most of the family came in to see me and wish me a good recovery. They were allowed in two at a time for about twenty minutes each. This was of special solace to me and helped my recovery ... back into family.

I had a further session in the compression chamber that afternoon. From then on I was brought into conscious and physical recovery. I was also tested for memory and mental recovery. It was good to catch up with the family members and also to be aware of the level of prayer that went heavenward on my behalf. The close family around were a great help to Dawn, also.

Dawn, Matthew and I returned by air ambulance to Wellington Hospital on Sunday afternoon.



After 24 hours in surgery and compression chamber, Bernie's first walk in ICU, Christchurch

I was in Ward 6 Wellington for a further week. Main emphasis was on getting medication settled, being visited by the surgeon, and undergoing exercises and walking with physiotherapists. I received many friends' visits and also wondered what the trauma and surgery was all about, and what lay ahead. We had both had a fright but something (Holy Spirit) was leading us both to a new level of awareness and ability to cope.

One incident worthy of mention in that recovery time was that I was bedded in the room next to Fiatala Siava. Fiatala and I both had similar heart problems at the same time. Now Fiatala is Isaac, our grandson's other grandfather. We discussed our predicaments and life a bit together. He was to die about a month later.

Rehabilitation – Porirua – There Must be Changes

I was sent to Kenepuru Hospital in Porirua where I stayed for five days. This was better for Dawn to visit me, and I was also visited by many close friends in the Porirua basin. I stayed in Kenepuru with a few people who were recovering from a stroke. The recovery process where minds, speech, and/or movement had been affected was very slow and difficult. I felt privileged to be recovering from heart surgery.

I had a very meaningful discussion with a rehab doctor. She talked me through details of post-surgical depression, heart attack trauma and associated thought denials and other possibilities, and getting home and getting on with my wife Dawn. The rehab doctor talked with me about the graveness of the surgery and suggested that my mind would now be less accommodating of normal life and that I would tend to suffer fools badly. So be careful and be aware.

She recommended exercise on a regular basis, food as my predominant source of medication, and lots of recreation and rest. I did a lot of physiotherapy in rehab at Kenepuru, loosening my legs in particular which had a wound for the whole length on my right leg where the surgeons harvested the replacement artery. My right leg was very swollen and weak. I also had stitches up the left side of my chest, which had been opened for the surgeon to have access to my heart.

I was in a ward with four mixed patients. Home on Wednesday, thanks Mark!

Aftermath – Paraparaumu – Being Alive

At home was a great step in my recovery. Dawn was with me full-time. We were visited by Kate the Rehab Nurse, and arranged to work with her and her group on Wednesday. About twenty rehab people attended gym classes followed by lectures.

With Dawn we started walking around the block, then the estuary, and finally Whareroa farm. After ten weeks I was walking freely for 2-3 hours.



Within six weeks, climbing first steps at Raumati, Paekakariki

Changes were afoot for us all to cope with the new situation. Changes both physical (weight and exercise), emotional (a transformed heart, a new day for living), and spiritual (God had allowed this and might want more of me/us). The days ahead would unfold a new place for Dawn and I in faith, in God, worship and obedience.



At Campbells Mill Road, bottom and top of Whareroa Farm. First hill climb.

With help from friends, and under Dawn's supervision, we redid the whole garden. The plan was to make it low maintenance. We became vegan for a few months and we walked daily. During this time I lost 10kgs and more than that, I had no further need for insulin for my diabetes 2. At night I had lots of dreams of my childhood in Dunedin, good ones, with good people.

At the moment of writing , I am still having a day walking followed by a day of rest. I am remaining on a low fat, low salt and low sugar diet. I am still NOT needing insulin for my diabetes. Haven't had insulin since the surgery. Also one puff each twelve hours is sufficient for asthma.

We started to attend a local church in Raumati, for the purpose of joining with other people who praise and worship God. It was great having our spirit amongst those closing in on God. Some of the people there had prayed for my recovery while I was in hospital. We both know that God has more for us. For me it is about accepting life and being in it day by day, and even hour by hour. With pleasure I wake up every morning and in turn, love those special people He has placed about me. This includes my Dawn and each of our children.



Pots, bark and vegetables in pots and rows.

PART 2

Hmmm, so Where is God?

This Section Summary:		
God	Absence/Presence	God
Sam McA Neighbour Son		Upbringing Creation Scripture

Supernatural after-life not manifest

My friend, Sam McAllister, of Scottish descent, with his Greek wife Parthenope, visited me in hospital. He seemed sure that during my illness and recovery, especially during my time under anaesthetic and surgery, that I would have had an experience of Jesus and of His Kingdom in heaven. Sam was disappointed when I advised him that I had no such vision or experience.

All of my time asleep was blank to me and to my memory. For me, during the illness and recovery God and His Kingdom were distant. For me, my personal experience and opinion, God was very distant in my consciousness during that period of sickness, surgery, and rehab. God's personal embrace was not evident in my body and in my natural and spiritual experience. Nor did I have an awareness of any afterlife.

Now if you are thinking that Sam's question to me was bizarre or even inappropriate, let me explain that the discussion of life after death was a topic which Sam and I had discussed in earlier times. Further, we both had spent time with Ian MacCormack (see later). Ian had a life after death experience and was allowed to come back to earth, and he now shares what he experienced and saw in his time in the afterlife. Ian was stung and killed by a box jellyfish. His full story is available to read and analyse on the web at www.aglimpseofeternity.org.

Supernatural and Divine Spirit Not Recognised in the New World Order!

I had good and meaningful discussions in hospital with one of my sons. We watched All Black rugby together from my hospital bed, and he spent time at the end of my bed talking about life and its vagaries. I am very proud of my son and of his achievements. I am uncertain of his spiritual tenets as I shall explain.

Now he is married. He is a very successful contracting business man around central government in Wellington. He has a viable (I think) vineyard north of Wellington as his superannuation. He was educated and brought up through the Catholic school system. He was raised with the family in a Pentecostal environment and we understand that he was "born again". In his early years, he spent

time working as an evangelist on the streets of Wellington. (Wellington is our capital city, located at the bottom of the North Island.)

After his marriage and family-raising, his work in Government circles, and our in-hospital discussions, this particular son appeared no longer to be a professing Christian or to believe in the spiritual aspects of life as represented by a relationship with Christ (religious). This phrase of “professing Christian” might need to be developed and explained further, because Christians and lovers of Jesus are not exclusive to those who are church-going.

My son and I talked about life and all that it has and does and might present each of us with. We discussed both our historical personal choices and opportunities given and taken. If I understood his side of our discussion, he saw no need whatsoever to defer to outside spiritual influences on and in life. I took it from his conversation that he thought that all we needed personally in this life was ourselves, fully alive, our initiatives, and a little bit of luck.

Both he and I never reached agreement on the prospect of existence (our spirit) beyond death and our life in a personal God. I can't say from my memory of our conversations what he thought of death, heaven or hell. We both agreed to continue on discussing at times in the future. I think this was a very valuable agreement, and we have both taken up the opportunity several times since my hospital sessions. We also agreed (I think) that the rules and regulations of mainstream churches, and the benefits of belonging religiously to such, left a lot to be desired (even repugnant?) (if we considered the existence of a personal God, who possibly lives and reigns for and with us – my own addendum to the initial point raised in this sentence .. BGT). Unfortunately, this son does not have a personal relation with Jesus, as I have; however both Dawn and I love and support fully. We love going to his vineyard. We love meeting with his friends. We love and pray to Jesus for him and his family each and every day. We celebrate God's favour on his life.

Considering life without a Judeo-Christian God

Dawn and I both work each week as volunteers with a neighbour. We help him with his orchard and with his vegetable growing in tunnel and glass houses. I have got to know him and his spirituality quite well, I think. In all occasions he is very sociable and friendly. He works in a local commercial business house in addition to work he does in and around his orchard. His orchard is run as a NFP Trust. He has a lot of volunteers who work with and for him. He is visited by people from all over the world because of his specialist growing and propagation. He is a good family man, and is extremely generous with his time, his plants and produce. He will spend time and service with people who might be in need. He regards his plants and fruit as medicine. He spends a lot of his time working with seeds to either grow and save ancient varieties or where they have been altered by man, to help them evolve and begin to return to their original form (as they were created).

It seems to me and my limited knowledge that he might be a Buddhist, but not necessarily so. There are Buddhist-like statues around the orchard on which one could ponder and reflect. He has a tree house in which he meditates. He does spend time alone in meditation. He shares his love and his healing for others from within himself. I get to think that he acknowledges the power for health and wealth exists within oneself. To him power needs to be recognised and tapped, not necessarily asked

for from a Father in Heaven through religious protocol. He also acknowledges the existence of beneficial powers in plants, in the air, and especially in the foods we might eat.

I discussed the issue and my take on it with my neighbour. The neighbour's written response to my points raised was:

"My spiritual understanding is that we are all spirit beings that have chosen to incarnate aspects of ourselves onto this earth plane - to experience life as physical beings. This brings with it many challenges and opportunities – all designed to help us fulfil our primary purpose, to grow and evolve our higher consciousness. Through the process of reincarnation we have opportunities to experience life as male or female, rich and poor. All aspects of life must be experienced (through many lifetimes) to allow sufficient opportunities for our development. Having recognised that the spirit continues to live beyond death of the physical body, we can come to realise that spirit guides and helpers."

What does all this mean? The key point of this chapter

These three examples of thought topics have occurred and still are occurring randomly in my life (in different forms), even after my surgery and rehabilitation from hospital. In conjunction with a transfer of residence in a new town, which I will be discussing further on, these issues and the attitudes of my son and my new friend gave me reason to doubt the existence of a Supernatural God in a place beyond us, called heaven. Neither persons mentioned above showed trust in any Christian Divine power.

This was not a radical aspect of thought life (that there was no Divine power) which might be life-changing for me if I allowed it, but one which comes up periodically in my journey through life. And which is being dealt with as part and parcel of my day to day thinking and living.

I think the issue here is whether there is any outside influence on man and on men. The issue revolves around recognition of a thing and/or a power outside of our own natural reasoning and existence.

I believe there is an "outside world" to which each and every man or woman can defer to. The role and extent of Divine influence and intervention may differ from one group of acceptable beliefs to another. Religion has been one of the dominant factors in most empires and states, even to this day. Neither Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, nor any of the world's other religions - not even paganism, satisfy

all the needs for mankind before and after. None make any claim that its founder is still alive.



I believe in the dependence of man and his planet on the Lord God, and His son Jesus Christ. Here is why. I have repented and turned from all of my sins; I have and do embrace Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. His death on the cross redeemed me, now and forever. I have **right now**, the privilege of going straight to heaven with Him the moment I die.

A Sustainable Solution to the Existence of God

A Theological Treatise

On one particular occasion, I started thinking about the existence of a Supernatural God and His place in my life. I had a lot of help from Dawn and from God Himself.

Basic Foundations of Belief were being Laid

I am a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, firstly because of my parents and my Catholic upbringing as a child. I was created through my parents in the image of God Himself but at a stage in my development, God breathed His life into me as spirit. For seventeen years, my parents, sisters and I prayed to and with God as a family each night. From the life He gave me in my mother's womb, I was an active Catholic with all of its help for my life through its sacraments. We fasted from midnight before receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion. Went to confession of my sins and misdemeanours with a priest regularly, and received Confirmation of the Holy Spirit in my teens. I was an altar boy at daily mass at 6.30am each day for a week every four weeks. At Catholic schools through ages 5 to 17 I had Christian education in depths and also practice. This time the Holy Spirit (God's presence here with us on earth – used interchangeably throughout this text BGT) developed a sound foundation of faith in me which would last for my whole life.

God had a plan for my life which would involve working and loving with a wife Dawn. He would present our love with eight healthy and beautiful children. Before my marriage with Dawn, I spent a week on retreat with God to seek His approval and support to my life-change. Both Dawn and I dedicated our lives and marriage to Him. I personally have never been without work, and usually got a pay rise upon the potential arrival of a new child. I retired from central government financial management after 50 years of service in 2015. I am very proud of each of our eight children as most of them outshine us in achievements. As I write, six or seven of them are not church-goers, despite their family and their upbringing. These ones and their families fail to realise and act as they are richly enjoyed by God, their creator.



Family: Eldest child, wife and children.



Life in the Spiritual World

In August 1977 both Dawn and I attended a “Life in the Spirit” seminar in Upper Hutt (North of Wellington) within the Catholic Church; and after that seminar we both became “born again” Christians. This required that I repent fully of all of my sins and to dedicate my life fully to Jesus. This meant that arising out of listening (prayer) I would obey and follow Jesus in all that He asked of me, that I would be His son, and that I would use the gifts which He might give me, including “speaking in strange tongues” as the apostles did at Pentecost. This is a separate story in itself but really the use of His language required me to submit my own mind and soul’s control and let things go ... into the supernatural.

Dawn and I left the Catholic Church in response to God’s call on our lives. Jesus redeeming death on the cross which we embraced and obtained our salvation from, His one sacrifice was a life-changing reason for us to change. We now fellowship in a Pentecostal Evangelical church in Whanganui.

Using Supernatural Principles to Build a Foundation of Faith

So from this time, with the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit I had experiences in and of the supernatural. These supernatural experiences were obvious as I prayed for and with people.

Specifically for me, I was able to see beyond the present, and to view issues pertaining to people in my presence from a historical perspective. In my prayer time I could see into the heavenly throne room and observe and hear the Father and Jesus communicating with one another, and even with the person in my presence. Whenever I was in the situation of praying for a person or persons, I could sometimes see beyond the conception and birth, into their historical blood lines. I also sometimes saw conceptions, pregnancies, birth, puberty, and marriage. This “seeing in the spirit” was particularly relevant for family matters and healing of hurts from family matters.

In these instances, I was obviously working through the existence and love of God in bringing hope and healing ... not my own knowledge or strength. In this area of my life, God was alive and well, both for me and for those for whom I spent time and prayed. He was alive through His Holy Spirit, a gift of His for me manifest since my re-birth.

These situations for healing others continued for and through me. They commenced from the time I was “born again” and extended beyond my time of rehabilitation from heart surgery. The presence of Holy Spirit in these situations helped in my reflections on the existence of God, which paralleled my times of doubt which we are discussing in this chapter.

An Addendum

The first part of this autobiography describes my heart attack, surgery, rehabilitation, and recovery. I guess you could say that with my heart attack and the subsequent air in my heart that I had suffered my first death. The surgeon in Invercargill hospital assured me that if I hadn’t come into A&E that evening, I would have been carried in shortly thereafter. So Sam’s question of me about life after death had some relevance. I know that Dawn prayed for my health and for the surgeons, and for my recovery. She had a group of intercessors around the world praying through the Holy Spirit, to God, for my full restoration. It seems in retrospect that God was not ready for me to be with Him in heaven at that time.

Even now, I wake up each morning and I thank Him and praise Him for giving me another day. The gift of a day is special for me, its precious for Him ... enjoyable. I look forward with Dawn to what He has for me to undertake in each and every day. I think I live more for the hour and for the day. I do not have long term goals and objectives. I just have today and I am grateful to Him, God who has given it to me. Therefore I have joy, and I am at peace. I also love those whom I meet with during my day. In God's eyes they are special; much loved by Him and to a lesser extent by myself.

Some Random but Meaningful (for me) Godly Considerations

What God is Doing

Shortly after my transfer to Whanganui, and during my rehabilitation period, I watched the DVD "Indescribable" by Louie Giglio. Louie Giglio is the Pastor of Passion City Church, located in Atlanta, Georgia. This DVD is one of a number of messages recently recorded by Louie Giglio. The American Pastor has produced a number of talks highlighting the amazing nature of the universe which we live in. The presentation is a combination of lecture and PowerPoint presentation, which powerfully and informatively presents the case for a creator, His creation, and more.

Louis's DVD brought me a sense of awe and worship which, frankly, I find missing in the world and the media today. In his DVD, Louie describes the heavens as telling the glory of God, and the huge expanse of His creation. It declares the work of His creative hands. The DVD "Indescribable" takes us on an image-rich journey through the cosmos, and in this we see the insignificance of the Milky Way galaxy and planet Earth on which we reside.

After watching and meditating on this DVD, I discovered the wonders of the Universe with the Creator. It's impossible to out-imagine God. He orchestrates time, creates light, and speaks things into existence-from the largest galaxy to the smallest star. God is a powerful, purposeful, personal, unparalleled Creator.



Earth within Milky Way Galaxy

Psalm 19:1 says, *"The heavens (pictured above) tell the glory of God. And the skies announce what his hands have made."*

Indescribable displays the majesty of creation with scientific findings, photography, and original illustrations. Giglio demonstrates the heavens as telling the glory of God; the size, shape and extent of the universe declares the work of His hands. Causes us to wonder if there are other beings in this universe, and if so, consider if they have been saved by His son, Jesus. Giglio suggests that night after night the heavens remind us of just how small we are, and how huge God is. As he takes his audience to look out into the far reaches of the universe, we do find a seemingly infinite expanse of mystery and wonder, intricately fashioned by a God of unfathomable size and power and purpose.

In the DVD, Giglio provides us with a glimpse of one of the billions of visible galaxies God has formed, this by definition resizes us, shrinking us, and the world we call home, to seeming insignificance in an instant. This particular fact had a big impact on me and the thought process about God's existence which I was having (described above). We are here in New Zealand in 2019, I was born in a country and at a time of relative peace and prosperity. We are definitely not the centre of anything, nor in control of much, in this universe! But as tiny as we in New Zealand may seem in the cosmic scheme of things, the God who knows every star by name also knows full well your name, and mine. He knows when and why you and I were born in New Zealand at this time in history.

In his article Indescribable, Giglio takes us on an image-rich journey through the cosmos, allowing us to peer into God's universe to discover the amazing magnitude of His greatness and grace. This DVD had a big impact on my thought life. It reminded me of God my Father, supreme, and creator of my life, my marriage, my family, my church family, my heaven and our earth. And in the most stunning rescue imaginable, God sent His Son Jesus to this spinning travelling planet we call home - the Creator reconnecting me (and you) to Himself with life that never ends!

Indescribable details available from internet: <https://passionresources.com/products/louie-giglio-indescribable>.

Why Might We Need God At All?

I have meditated on the above DVD. I view ourselves as earthlings, on a very small planet insignificant in our own galaxy, and even more so in the universe of galaxies. At the time of writing, there are 7.53 billion people living on the planet. There are recorded 140 million babies born each year, and 57 million people die. To us here it is large and scientists are talking of the issues of over-population.

A key point to consider is the one of us and the issue of dependency outside of us. I mean dependency in and from something or someone of another world. My point would include dependency for beginning, living, and for after death. Any dependency under consideration would be relative to individual people as well as groups, tribes, and nations. Religions are a category used in the study of dependency on an outside or spiritual influence. Of the 7 billion people currently on this planet, 1.2 billion do not recognise any dependency outside the world for physical or spiritual well-being. This accounts for 16% of the overall population and is described as including Secular, Nonreligious, Agnostic, and Atheist.

For the remaining world-wide population; 2.4 billion are Christians (33%) , 1.8 billion Islam, and 1.15 billion Hinduism. These statistics have been obtained from Google; World Population and World Religions: ([https://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/10/06the odd body religion/](https://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/10/06the_odd_body_religion/))

These statistics demonstrate the needs for health and wealth of mankind. The needs themselves are regarded as being provided by membership within these three major religions. Membership of and following in the religion of Christianity, which I am living and writing herein, is the major provider for the people on the planet. With Christianity's documentation on the birth of the world and the nation of Israel, and on their ending, there is a very good reason to give Christianity "a go". This has credence when you read of how He created the world in the beginning, and how He will end it.



Jesus on the cross.



The cross in a galaxy very distant from earth (Giglio).

I have found the relationship with the spiritual world in Jesus and His Father, Yahweh, to be absolutely fulfilling in all areas of my life journey. Through the reality of my own personal birth to Jack and Lilly I was made in God's own image and likeness; My Father, God, His redeeming son Jesus, and His enabling Holy Spirit give me personally continuing support and help and forgiveness throughout my life, to my eventual death and resting in His arms. I have three sisters (Arlie, Coline, and Sharyn) who have gone before me and who are at their rests in eternity; I am the eldest surviving son and brother, 77 years to this day.

God and New Zealand

In response God had a plan of specialty and specific for New Zealand, this land of ours. He knew full well of the plight of the Maoris, He also knew of their need for Him and His son. They needed Him for their own peace of mind, for peace in the land, and for the establishment of His Kingdom. They were good at agriculture, fishing, and hunting. They were warriors, and they knew the world of the spirit.

In His plans for the destiny of this land and its indigenous people, He brought missionaries and missionaries from Great Britain to settle alongside the Maoris in their villages.

I am including extracts from my book "*Life and works of Octavius Hadfield*" by Bernie Townsend; Arun Books ISBN 978-0-473-20344-3 which show the planning by God for the people of New Zealand. God was keen to establish a country with structure and practices becoming of the King of Kings and His Son, Jesus. Research for Hadfield was the key effort of my research for my Master in Theology studies, and the book resulted.

From my extract of Hadfield's writings to his family back home, you will get a glimpse of the type of people he had come to live with. His ambition was to teach and encourage them in the ways of the Lord Jesus (Anglican version). You will also notice the strides the indigenous people in the lower North Island made amongst themselves with support from Hadfield and his fellow missionaries. The main accomplishment was about an 80% conversion to Christianity in Kapiti and its regions. This was a revival of major proportions. He taught the locals to read and to write, and to swap their swords and muskets for plough shares. Some of his young men visited most of the maraes in the South Island, Stewart Island, the Chathams, and Pitt. A very valuable and productive missionary trip by some of the men from Kapiti! In all the time Hadfield spent working for His Lord in Kapiti, there were no wars amongst or between tribes. This peace endured in spite of the presence of the war-lord Te Rauparaha.

Extract from the Life and Works of Octavius Hadfield...

What God had in store for Aotearoa

"Now, Octavius Hadfield was born at Bonchurch, Isle of Wight, on 6 October 1814, the tenth child of a family of twelve. The Hadfield family traced its lineage through Derbyshire forebears to a Yorkshire seat. His father was Joseph, a man of commerce and trading – a silk merchant. His mother Amelia was the daughter of General White, an Indian Army Officer.

Early in 1836, he made up his mind he would go to work somewhere as a missionary. He admits in his writings that he did not attend any missionary meetings or read any missionary literature, but he studied the New Testament.

He was deeply impressed with the fact that after the lapse of eighteen centuries, our Lord's command at the close of His work Matthew 28;19-20 had been so imperfectly obeyed. This strong impression left a sense of duty upon him, a duty which could not be disregarded.

He wrote to the Church Missionary Society on September 11, 1837 offering himself as a missionary and saying that he was prepared to go to any part of the world.

In February 12 1838, at aged 23, he left for Australia and then New Zealand on a ship *John*. The voyage took just over four months, arriving in Sydney on July 1, 1838. On September 23, 1838, he was ordained deacon by Bishop Broughton in Sydney.

In December, he sailed with the Bishop for the Bay of Islands, New Zealand; on board the naval ship *Pelorus*, arriving at Paihia on December 21. He was ordained a priest by the Bishop January 6 1839 at Paihia – the first priest to be ordained in New Zealand.

His first post was teaching the sons of missionaries in the school at Paihia. He did study the Maori language a little with William Williams, with whom he stayed, but because of his teaching commitment, most of his conversations were in English. He taught for almost a year on a three day a week basis.

This extract from one of his own letters to his father dated 1839, best describes what happened:-

“Te Rauparaha’, the principal Chief of the southern part of the Island, and who has hitherto by his very name caused terror in all directions having been a bloodthirsty savage, having in a providential manner had a few leaves of the Gospel of St. Luke brought amongst his people, and a native, formerly a slave, having given them instruction from this, has lately sent two young chiefs to us requesting missionaries. My wish on this subject being known, it was proposed to me to go there, and I readily assented. .. I yet know next to nothing of the language...I will take one or two Christian natives for teachers...”

Hadfield and Williams (Williams later went to the East Coast to establish his mission “Vineyard”) arrived at Waikanae on November 11th. They were welcomed by 1000 people, with whom they held a short service.

On arriving at Otaki in 1839, Hadfield found that there were already groups of Maori meeting for prayer using the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, parts of which had been translated into Maori.

Christianity was already beginning to transform a part of New Zealand which was formerly known for its cruelty. Here is an extract from one of Hadfield’s last sermons as he retired from Kapiti to live out his remaining life in Marton.

Extract from one of Hadfield’s Last Sermons at Otaki

“I will venture this morning to depart from my usual custom, and ask you to let me direct my thoughts for a few minutes to what the state of the Maoris of these islands really was only a very few years ago – I mean within the memory of many now living.

It is true these people had some good qualities. There was nothing mean or cowardly about them, they were independent and self-reliant.

They were however under the influence of degrading superstitions.

They were cannibals.

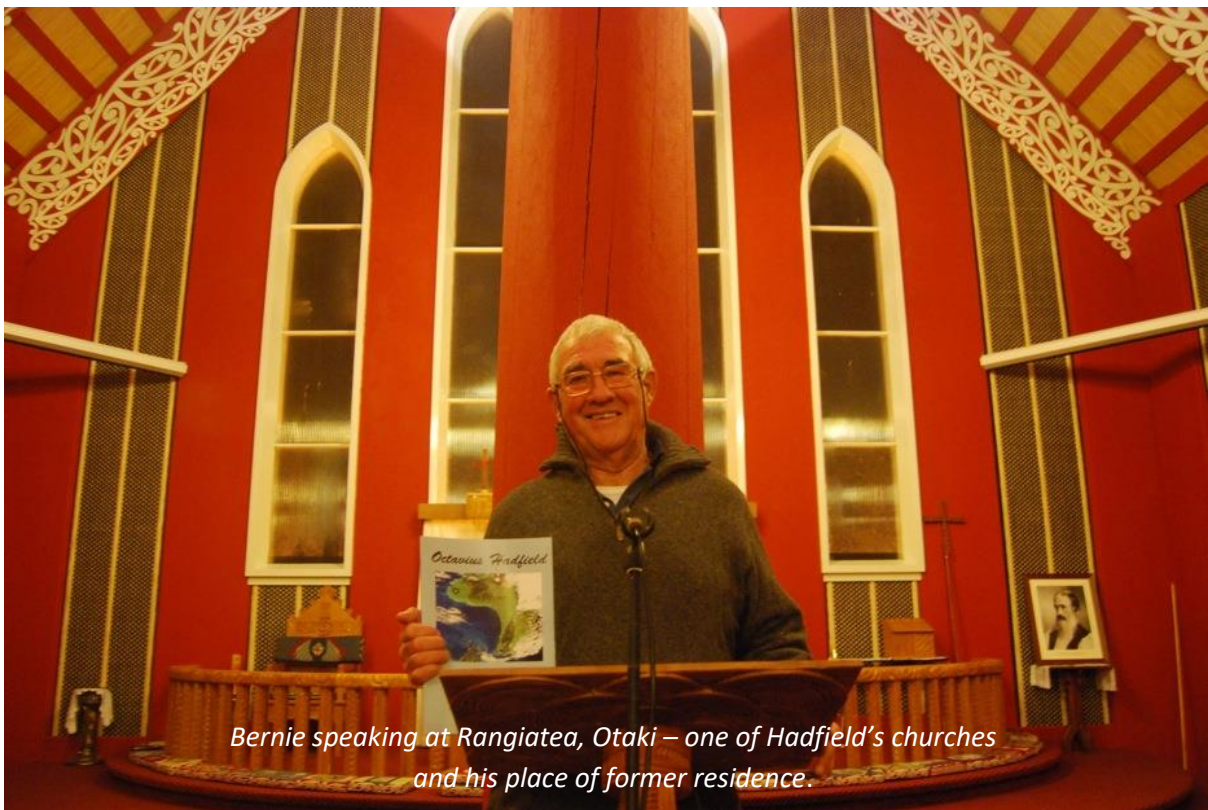
They maintained slavery in its most abject form; the life of a slave was entirely at the mercy of his master. I have known a slave killed, almost before my own eyes – killed for the most trifling offence, and this without exciting any indignation.

Infanticide, when I first came among them, was practiced by parents apparently without any feeling of compunction whatever. I have known a newly-born infant to be buried alive by its parents.

Human life was not valued very highly. My own life was once attempted by an enraged chief ... this very chief, a man who had long been noted for his reckless and violent conduct, who would have taken my life without hesitation, subsequently became a devout Christian, not only helping me by his influence with his people, but becoming a regular attendant at church and at Holy Communion.

It would take but little effort on my part to recall very many instances of similar faith in Christ having produced lasting effects on the lives of converted Maoris belonging to that class of men and women apparently the most hardened. But it is needless to do so. I would rather confine myself in saying, that in hundreds of instances, I have known converts whose faith and general consistency of life to the last, have satisfied me that their religion was the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

But perhaps a fact, which ought to speak for itself is that the work of the church amongst the Maoris of this diocese is –with the exception of two Englishmen clergymen – entirely carried on by the ministrations of Maori deacons and lay readers; the former, whose whole time is given to their work, receive small stipends, the lay readers look for none.”



Bernie speaking at Rangiatea, Otaki – one of Hadfield’s churches and his place of former residence.

From these extracts you should be able to see the hand of God on the establishment of Europeans within the existing population. Brave and humble men like Hadfield, who gave up all for Almighty God to use in building His kingdom in New Zealand. Their main aim was spreading the Gospel, bringing peace and a sense of purpose among the indigenous peoples, and dealing with those cultural issues which were not pleasing to God.

Hadfield’s last sermon mentions some of the hereditary sins, and also some of the achievements in terms of God’s kingdom building.

God and His Bible

I am not including a full bible study on these issues about spirituality which I have raised. However, in these two following bible extracts, the point is made quite conclusive by both Paul and by John.

John shares Jesus assurance that for any of us to see anything in the spiritual world, we need to be “born again” of His Holy Spirit. The two pieces from the Bible which spoke most to me in my search for answers and for Him were very relevant at the time.

The first verse was when Jesus told Nicodemus that a new spirit is needed if we are to embrace or understand things of the spirit. This involves belief in the existence of a spiritual world.

The second scripture, which I meditated on, was from Paul in his writings to the people of and in Rome. At the start of his letter to the Romans, Paul writes clearly that creation and the environment in which we live is sufficient to confirm the existence of a God, He who creates (for our benefit).

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

John 3

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.[a]”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[b] gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You[c] must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit

Paul Writing to the People of Rome

Romans 1

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

I am closing this chapter at this point. I trust I have made it clear from a narration of my thought patterns that after a period of doubt, I came back to the conclusion that there is indeed a God, a supernatural God for all of mankind. This was His design, and that I knew Him intimately.



Paul writing to the Romans about creation proving the existence of God.

Downsizing

It soon became obvious that our family home in Paraparaumu was too large for the two of us and our new lifestyle. The orchid houses to maintain, the lawns to mow, and the house to clean. At that time the children and their families were not visiting regularly, nor were they staying for any periods of time. I think Hannah and Isaac spent some time with us, also we had Chris staying for a while. The truth was that the children weren't visiting or staying on a regular basis. Therefore, our house was too big for our current needs as a retired couple, and as a result of my heart surgery. Some other family could make better use of this home, and we should look for something smaller in which to live out the rest of our days.

We would be comfortable in a two-bedroom home, using the second bedroom as an office, if necessary. Dawn needed a walk-in shower, a shower in the bath proved to be too slippery and difficult to climb into and out. We both agreed that an attached garage would be essential, preferably one carpeted for spill-over sleeping whenever necessary. I would be happy with a small vegetable garden, and not much lawn to mow (if any?). It was important that we both worked through the future housing and that the Holy Spirit was our helper throughout. We all three came to agreement to downsize. This common agreement was significant for us and for our movement for the future.

We viewed some videos on the "minimalist" and these helped us to rationalize what we could survive well, what we needed and what we wanted, in terms of clothes and furniture. As for the items deemed superfluous to "retirement living", we progressively sold at garage sales, etc. We began to look at housing options around the Kapiti Coast, we looked and looked, but we found nothing viable in the price range appropriate to us. We also viewed the options for retirement homes, but frankly, neither of us wanted to give up our independence, at this stage.

I was looking in the local newspaper and found a commentary that Dunedin was providing a cheap place to live and to retire to. On average, the articles suggested, Dunedin was the cheapest place to establish a residence. After sharing this possibility with Dawn, I got an emphatic response that she would never ever return and live in the place of her birth. But she offered in a constructive way that we should look for a home for us in Whanganui!

So the next day we both went to Whanganui to look around at the residential housing market; and we were both thrilled at the possibility. Dawn's younger sister lived there (returning from England), and our lifetime friend Frances also lived there. Housing was economic, and there were good activities for the elder generation to be involved with. The weather also was more temperate than the Kapiti Coast. On return or near after, we put our house in Kapiti on the market and we left for a trip down the West Coast of the South Island on completion of our planned trip which was interrupted by my heart surgery.



The home and section in Kapiti was too large for our living needs.

It was great to have our house on the market for sale while we were away in the South Island. There was no need to continually clean up the house for visitors or for open homes.

We travelled on the inter-island ferry to Picton, where at Blenheim we spent a day with Dawn's sister Maureen and Lindsay. I played a game of golf with Lindsay. Then we travelled to Christchurch and spent a day there with our son Phil and Sharon, enjoyed their new house in Wigram.

A day later we were in Dunedin where we spent a night with my sister Raewyn at Lookout Point (great view down the harbour), and a day at the Albatross colony at the end of the Otago Peninsula.

Remembrances and laughs were on the agenda at all of these places with these wonderful whanau or extended family. Finally we travelled to Clinton and to the Catlins for a few days to enjoy the friendly people and the rugged Southern coastline.



Dawn in the Catlins; the flora and fauna goes right down to the sea edge.

I was impressed by the forestry and the native reserves in that area, but the ruggedness of the coast, the swimming dolphins, and the history of shipwrecks all along that part of New Zealand coast left an awesome scene in my memory. A very memorable afternoon for me was the afternoon we walked from St. Clair to St. Kilda and then Tomahawk. Both Saints were beaches with about 2-3km between them.

As we walked along the sandhills, Dawn began to reminisce on her early childhood where she played, cried and laughed and generally recreated along the sandhills and the beaches. Issues she had had with her family and at school with her teachers were revisited as we walked. Whew not an easy childhood! We reached Moana Rua where the Women's Surfing Club was located. Many a sandhill was spoken to as she described her upbringing and recreated in the surf. We also went along the park (Bathgate) where I practised and played rugby after leaving school.

We returned back to Dunedin where we spent a day with Dawn's sister Cathy and her husband Graham. I planted some lilies from my garden in Kapiti in their garden on the drive. We talked and laughed most of the night. Graham was in the initial stages of establishing his Airbnb business in his large home in Caversham.

Next day we left and drove up the State Highway to Oamaru and turned inland to Omarama. There we shared a wine in the hot pools in the evening. The pools were heated by open wood fire. To the local owner we must have looked old and decrepit for he insisted that his wife drive us back home to our cabin. Oh great southern hospitality!

Next day we travelled up to the entrance and car park for Mt. Cook. Mt. Cook is the highest mountain in New Zealand. It was a most beautiful sight and a great day. We travelled on to Fairlie on a hot summers day. There we booked into a cabin for the night and we went to the local bakery to buy and taste one of their favourite salmon pies!!

Next day we bypassed Christchurch and went up the South Island to Kaiteriteri Beach to enjoy some of Dawn's early memories from frequent family visits to the golden sands and surf. Sandhills, golden sand, light gentle waves on the surf. Many memories for Dawn as she reminisced swimming beyond the breakers with her dad. We travelled up to Golden Bay and stayed for a time at Farewell Spit. You could almost hit a 1-wood from the spit to our home in Kapiti! We also spent three days in a "tiny" house, something we might get used to in the future.



We spent some time at towns and villages above Nelson. The weather was so kind to us. After a while we travelled back down to Picton. We caught the ferry back to Wellington and home again! To the house sale in Kapiti and the chance to look seriously at smaller homes in Whanganui, which would serve both of our purposes.

At this time the Lord comforted each of us separately and together as He assured us that His home in Whanganui would fulfil our wildest dreams. He also said that He had work for us to complete in His city, Whanganui.

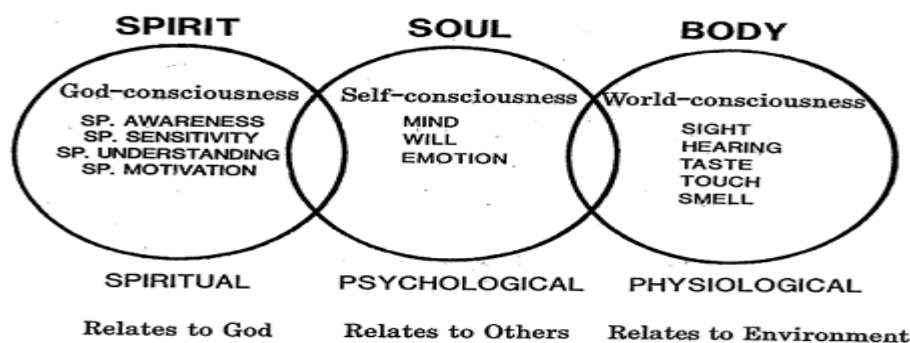
Life in the Spirit

As I introduce you (the reader) to this chapter, I thought it helpful if I discussed an experience which I have enjoyed and which made a lifelong impact on my life and of those around me. The experience is called "Life in the Spirit". For me, the experience came about many decades ago, (1977) in Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, Heretaunga, Upper Hutt, Wellington. I was already aware from my background that my life consisted of Soul (mind, thoughts), Body (actions) and Spirit (hopes, dreams, and desires).

Definitions for your understanding, as you read, are:-

- **Soul** is defined as one person, or is the spirit and essence of a person. An example of your soul is the part of you that makes you who you are. It comprises mainly your brain and its memories and decisions. Your soul acts in control of both body and spirit.
- Your **body** contains the temporal things of this world. Bodies decline with age, their destiny is ashes and dust on the earth.
- Christians emphasise that the **human spirit** is the 'real person', the very core of a person's being, the essential seat of their existence. Christians regard the spirit as being alongside God (He is a spirit being) and the spirit lives on into and through eternity. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Saviour, it is their human spirit that is transformed (or awakened) as they become 'new creatures' in Jesus Christ.

MAN—A TRIUNITY



The diagram above was sourced from Google. The diagram demonstrates the three parts that comprise a man or woman. As my Spirit awoke, it took on God features, at my request. My soul, which is the centre of my being, follows either my body or my spirit. Good at following my body, but learning by the day to listen to and comply with issues raised by my spirit.

Well, the life that I was seeking in that seminar, was a more radical and vibrant life than the one which I had been living. Until that time, my human spirit was asleep, virtually non-effective as regards to the choices and decisions I was making. The main part of my life was being lived out from experience and to a lesser extent guidance (from parents, etc). I was not aware of the possibility of spiritual influence, nor was I aware of how to recognise and yield to the promptings of my spirit.

The “Life in the Spirit” seminar at Our Lady of Grace church was all about accepting the existence of a spirit (God’s) in my life. During that seminar, I was taught to recognise my spirit and listen to the spirit within me as it worked to influence my living. From this seminar, my soul has embarked on a lifetime journey of listening to my spirit and following its direction. Previously my soul (mind, thought patterns) was used to following my body, its wants, needs, and delights; however, it was not able to recognise the awakenings of my Spirit, nor follow its promptings for my spiritual welfare. I suppose here I am talking about a “born again” experience; as my life began to take on a spiritual dimension alongside my worldly life.

The seminar leaders spent lots of personal time with me (and others) teaching from the Bible about and encouraging me in this new dimension to decision-making for my life. I became aware of gems for my life in the Bible, of the vision of seeing God and His angels working in the world around me, and the Holy Spirit talking to me and supporting me as my life took on a supernatural dimension. Things like: church, leadership, prophecy, gifts of the spirit, etc, started to have a new and meaningful proposition in all of my choices and decision-making.

I realised that as I walked “in the Spirit”, Jesus and His redemption became real for me. I was convicted of my negative score against keeping ten of the commandments, and I knew that despite my failings I was cleansed and marked for heavenly places now; on my deathbed, and beyond. This new walk was a choice for me. Now my spirit lived within me as a foretaste of eternal life, of supernatural existence with Jesus my saviour and redeemer. The Spirit of God also lived within me, as a reality of Him outworking His life with me, for His purposes and His glory. I could still walk in my previous ways, satisfying my flesh and its wants and desires, but now I had the choice of doing what was beneficial to my spirit. I could give examples, but I will hold back on that, because each person’s walk is their own (not a copy of mine) as they too learn to walk into the spiritual world of the supernatural. (Watching a game of football or indulging in a prayer-time?!?)

One thing I noticed after my experience in that seminar was that as I spent time contemplating with and through my spirit, I became aware of my need for holiness and for righteousness. These goals became second nature for me, whether I wanted them or not. These desires came from out of my spirit especially as my mind (soul) contemplated on issues, choices, and decisions before me. Over the years since, they became second nature, then first nature as I drew closer to the spiritual world and my Spiritual redeemer.

I came to appreciate that the Holy Spirit was fully present within my spirit, and this embracing of “The Godhead” within myself gave me a sure reason to listen to Him and to follow His promptings. He is building His church and has me included as one of the builders. As I moved into this reality (the existence and presence of Holy Spirit (God) within me), a sacredness cloak came over me, and spread into all of my relationships and my thoughts words and deeds. Further, as my body talks in English, my spirit talks in prayer languages; some of which (not all) are interpreted by my mind (soul). We got plenty of practise speaking in prayer languages (I have more than one) from the leaders of the seminar and beyond, in prayer groups and Pentecostal churches in the intervening years. So precious to know that in using His gift of languages, I am speaking with Him, His very own way. I can also speak with spirits of other “born again” spirit filled believers.

I have written this description of my “new life” for you to understand that our movement to Whanganui was a move in obedience to both of our spirits. What I am describing hereafter is mainly from a Holy Spiritual perspective, an expression of spiritual obedience first and foremost.

Choosing

From our looking around at houses in Kapiti we had come up with a checklist for our new home. Holy Spirit constantly assured us that He had our needs very much in His mind, and advised us to take our time and follow Him.

We both wanted a smaller home, with two bedrooms, it had to be newish and easily maintained, well insulated, internal garage, and a small bit of land for fruit trees and a vegetable garden including a place for the remainder of our orchid collection. We didn’t mind a shared driveway and were fairly happy to share with other people’s homes down the driveway. We needed full sun, and a quiet street, not a main arterial route. This summarised our “shopping list”.

We spent two months looking around Whanganui for something which would match our requirements. We spent a lot of time with one agent who came to know us, our needs, and our decision-making process. We had in view a nice home in Aramoho, with land backing onto a farm. It had a sleepout, however the hills at the back of the property would have blocked out the afternoon sun. We looked seriously at a home and land in Gonville, but Dawn wasn’t happy with the lack of a garage. We tried to find something in Castlecliff, near the beach, but nothing suitable was available at the time.

Then our agent rang me! She had a property newly on the market. It was not yet publicly advertised. We arranged to look through that property on Thursday afternoon. Well, Dawn went one way through the house and I went through the other way (front and back). When we met in the middle, we both clicked onto the likelihood of this property as being suitable. The house ticked off all of the specific requirements we had agreed upon. It was located down a driveway with two other homes, in a dead-end street with little or no traffic, and a small garden and lawn area (ten minutes to mow!).

After Dawn went through the place with a fine tooth comb (after all she was going to make it into a home for us), we both agreed that this was what we had been looking for all the time. We gave Him time, and the Holy Spirit agreed with us on this one.

The property had been originally part of the Anglican church holding and the home was prayed through as it was being built we found out later. Dawn loved the sun room and more specifically the walk in large shower. She was also taken by the two large clumps of Birds of Paradise plants. We both agreed that the bath would be removed and replaced with a second toilet. Naturally, (to us) the garage would be carpeted for multi usage. I liked the external men’s shed, a shed split in two with a workshop and a garden storage area. I think the most attractive aspect of this house was the peace and quiet, peace of God already present.

Dawn and I spent some time listening to and conversing with Holy Spirit on the situation. His will was paramount for us, as we both had Him in our hearts we sort of guessed what He would say.

That Thursday evening, we made an offer on the property and we made it clear to our agent that it was a once only offer; we did not want to go back and forth haggling over price or value. She came back to us on Friday afternoon with an acceptance. We were on the move and had a place to live!!



Our new home in Whanganui

Shifting

I have mentioned earlier that Dawn and I had gone through our material possessions critically, and that most un-needed items had been disposed of in Kapiti through garage sales and family. As regards to the heavily culled orchid collection, I had kept the flowering ones. Frank and I took four trailer loads up to Frances in Castlecliff. Frank enjoyed the trips up to Whanganui, he loved the church-based lunch meals for \$3.

I also moved some fruit trees in pots from the gardens in Kapiti to Castlecliff. These fruit trees included a Nashi pear, Greengage, Black Doris Plum, Feijoa, some blackcurrants, and citrus. They were all settling well in pots, and Frances had a good place along the side of her house to give them temporary shelter, and she watered every 2/3 days.

Our grandson Bradley and two of his friends came down the day before we moved. We had rented a transport van in Whanganui, so the “boys” came down in the van. They packed all of our belongings, beds, and whiteware, etc. and set off with them to Whanganui, to our new house. They arrived in Whanganui about lunch time and proceeded to unload all the items. They put up the bed for us, and connected whiteware, fridge and freezer. Nothing was lost or broken, thank the Lord. This left us to empty boxes of stuff from the garage as and when they were needed. Many thanks to the helpers - not a job we could have easily undertaken ourselves, and commercial transport movers would have been expensive.

Our son Matthew and his wife Sara helped us with the loading and unloading at both ends. Dawn, Frances, and I bought the plants from Castlecliff, and I soon found good homes for all the fruit trees and for the orchids. The previous owner’s garden comprised weed mat with 2-3 inches of stones, so

I broke through the weed mat down into the soil for the trees. The orchids fitted nicely along the western fence line which was sunny and sort of protected by the eaves and the house.

The neighbour next door came over to welcome us, and he asked if I would like an allotment for growing vegetables across the road, as I seemed like a keen gardener. The allotment was part of St. John's Wood Fellowship, a retreat house with a few animals. As I nodded my head to him, he went off and rotary hoed the area for me and fenced it off from the animals. Wow! This was a gift extraordinary, for a retired financial accountant to spend his latter days in the garden.

Dawn did an excellent job arranging the furniture, most fitted within the various rooms (I think we disposed a bed settee which was too large to fit in). Once all of the furniture was placed in its near-final position, we spent some time re-arranging furniture to make best usage and to leave the rooms spacious. This wasn't altogether easy as we had downsized to a two bedroom home.

We walked around the perimeter of the house and thanked Jesus for His benevolence. We invited Him to come and occupy all aspects of the house and to use it for His purpose.

Developing relationships - 1

This section is very difficult for me to write, and I really pray that as you read you will appreciate what I am writing and apply some of the issues to your own life, if relevant. Both sections in no way are meant to criticise or judge Dawn and her attitude towards married life in retirement. They were both offered in a spirit of joint co-operation and respect. I am including both statements from Dawn as they are necessary to be spoken and worked through in a relationship which is loving.

I have prayed about what and how I communicate the information.

As Dawn, my wife, discussed with me about our pending new life together as a retired couple in Whanganui, she made it quite clear to me that I shouldn't view her as a sex toy in the new environment. This caught me by surprise. I went to the Holy Spirit in prayer about it, for me in particular.

To date we had eight children and we were both still quite sexually active. For me, sexual relations were the way of deeper relationships, man with woman. I liked to look at my wife and to touch her, and to climb into bed with her. For me, sexual relationships soothed over all issues including disagreements, misunderstandings or just plain physical love between the two of us. Hmmm!

As I spent time with Holy Spirit on this issue, first He assured me that Dawn had the right to make this statement. It was what she was thinking and hoping for us both. She was not saying no more sexual relationships, but she didn't want to be taken for granted, to allow her feelings to have an expression in our relationship. She didn't want to be invited to vacuum without clothes, sleep naked, not wear bras, or anything like that. But to be loved and respected just for who she was - retired, Christian and my wife.

Then in our prayer time the Holy Spirit advised me that sex was not love! Wow! I choked on this one! If it wasn't love, what was?? I discussed with Dawn about this and she was adamant that it was

certainly part of love, but not the entirety. I started to think and practise other measures which Dawn could appreciate as love for her. We sat on the sofa and held hands. She prayed the bible for us both each morning and evening. I wash and dry the dishes. I hang out the washing. We kiss one another often. I walk with her around the streets, listening to her conversation and her topics of interest. I encourage her with the managing of our finances. I let her spend time with her friends and I listen to a summary of her conversation afterwards. Most of all, I spent time with her; encouraging and supporting her; and I judge at this early stage that she is feeling loved. It's not that I never did these things before, no; I now do them consciously, and for and with her and her alone. It's changing me (and us), big time. And I am spending lots of quality time with my lover, hearing her describe her childhood, her upbringing, and the things that she likes and dislikes. I let her speak her mind at meetings and uplift and support her opinion. I am discovering the wealth of love which she has, a treasure of love sitting in her heart ready to give out, and I seek to replenish that love as necessary. Fortunately my sex drive has dried up physically. Even with Viagra I have to wait an hour for that drug to work in my body, and then sometimes an hour is too late.

I have found, and I am still discovering that Dawn loves with mind and heart, from the spirit, and this for her is much much better and more resilient than love sourced from the body. We have lots of fun and times of smiles and laughter at ourselves and life around us. We joke and tease one another, and enjoy the togetherness of light-hearted living. We experience and enjoy God's joy in our life and we share this with the church members and neighbours around us. Dawn's bed is randomly apple-pied. I respect Dawn's desire to talk and relate with people, I am less eager to get involved with people - especially those whom I judge foolish or going nowhere (apparently this is a condition of those who have undergone major surgery). I tend to go down a quieter path with all, except Dawn. This is not an exclusive list of actions or items; it represents a change in lifestyle and in my basic attitude even after 55 years of marriage. We both look forward to our joint company, achieving little or nothing except sheer joy together, without sexual activity (poking and prodding!) being at the centre, (as a measure,) as a loving retired couple should.



Dawn and I travel on a double-decker bus to Waiouru War Museum.



Boat, Whanganui River

Developing relationships - 2

The second crucial thing which happened and which greatly affected the two of us, was Dawn's statement that from now on, in Whanganui, she would do her own thing. And even if I interfered in that process of hers, she would continue to do her own thing. She wanted to be herself and responsible fully for herself.

Now fundamentalists would find fault with this statement. They would talk about the man (me) being in charge, being the head, and Dawn submitting thereto. However, this is not so, now at all. There are things from skills and experience that I am very competent with, and things which Dawn has competency. God made us equal, man and woman similar and subservient, not hierarchical, except in our areas of expertise. Holy Spirit Himself is to be hierarchical, at the top, first and foremost. In the early days of the Charismatic renewal we saw many marriages tumble over the hierarchical marriage state. Men demanding and even enforcing their rights, apparently as heads!

Being tired (now aged 77) and recovering from major heart surgery, I have found it suitable for me to sit back and let Dawn take the lead in the running of our relationship and the household. While I know strategically what happens to our finances, Dawn pays most of the accounts, reconciles the statements, and makes investment decisions where appropriate. She won't make a major decision without my support, I think and hope! She chooses what we watch on TV, and when we have the heater on (she is on heavy drugs for rheumatoid arthritis, the drugs keep her body hot) I just go along with it. During the winter months, we viewed all our old Christian and Biblical DVDs. This was a great experience for us both and gave us lots to share about, together.

If Dawn wants to go out, or to visit, she does; I encourage this social interaction, especially amongst the Maori. She is learning Te Reo, and that is difficult but good for her. I am not learning Te Reo, as I adjudge that the best I can give my indigenous brothers and sisters is my European heritage, to the fullest. Dawn is working with me in the garden, harvesting the fruit and vegetables and planning planting. Her planting ideas are based on potential usage in the kitchen; she also grows from memory of her parents' gardens back in Dunedin. This is very interesting for me to learn, and it is also difficult for me to adhere to. I do the background work like planting, sowing, fertilizing.

I muse from the background of my sofa, not being authoritative or demonstrating control. Dawn acts in a "do it my way" capacity most days. I find this very relaxing, and I really encourage her in the choices she makes and in the achievements she presents our family with. It might sound like I am taking my foot off the accelerator of life, and it is to an extent. However, I have input as I am asked and I provide security and support as I judge necessary (possibly a foot hovering near the brake!?!). Most major decisions, including travel, are made jointly; sometimes I have to go to Paraparaumu or Wellington for volunteer work, then Dawn arranges the trip and any visitations she desires around my itinerary.

As a couple, we pray the Bible every morning at the breakfast table, Dawn usually reads, and I write down insights from Holy Spirit which we might get. We pray for God's favour on all our children and grandchildren. We pray in the spirit language as our bodies rest, here. Before we retire to bed, we read a page from Heidi Baker, and refer to the events and people of our day. I pray each morning for all members of the extended family (I name each of them, and I include issues I might know they might

be working through) and I thank God for His favour on them. For as they communicate with us, these favourable instances are varied, special and frequent. Often the children do not see or hear the favourable events, but they occur all the same, and I thank Him for His love.

You might ask in this context, where I get my affirmation from. I am referring to my confirmation of life, decisions, relationships. Well, the answer is from the Holy Spirit. He talks with and to me often. He tells me what to do and how to react. This is often different to my carnal mind, often! He reminds me that I am God's son, one of His children. I am created in His image and likeness. As I live in my Spirit, Holy Spirit lives within me; therefore I go about as God's creation. I see Creation's things, His ways. As I rest in these realities, I have lots of affirmation. Careful but affirmed, loved and endorsed. If there is any disagreement, say between Dawn and I, it is surely and quickly worked through in that space and with that realisation. I love her, and am supporting her developing into wholeness and into sanctity.

I see the strength in Dawn's nature. Her life is amazingly great as it has been built up on experience in family life, as a Christian, as a potter, as a real estate agent, and finally as a caregiver for IHC and mentally disabled people.

It is the latter vocation which she has carried on into our retirement, much to my dismay. When I am checked over before I go out visiting somewhere special, I detect an element of pride in me, which needs to be dealt with. I don't really care if my shoes are clean, my socks the same, shirt on the right way, jacket pure and clean, face washed, and hair combed. These are all things which Dawn was expert at checking and remedying in her job as caregiver with IHC, but with me, her husband, dressed personally and ready on time??? It's probably a control thing she learnt from St. Philomena's when they taught her how to take care of a Christian Brother's boy (aged). Good on you Dawn! I did learn how to steal my nerve and clench my teeth. All of these come in handy, as I develop trust and humility in a Ravensbourne girl. However, I trust that a 77 year old needs his presentation checked over externally and his comments reviewed after the event sometimes.

She is a good wife and a great mother to all of our children. As I view her "running" the home, I see these entire strengths manifest, for our good and the good of the community. She is a strong person in the Lord, and has an open heart for and with Him.

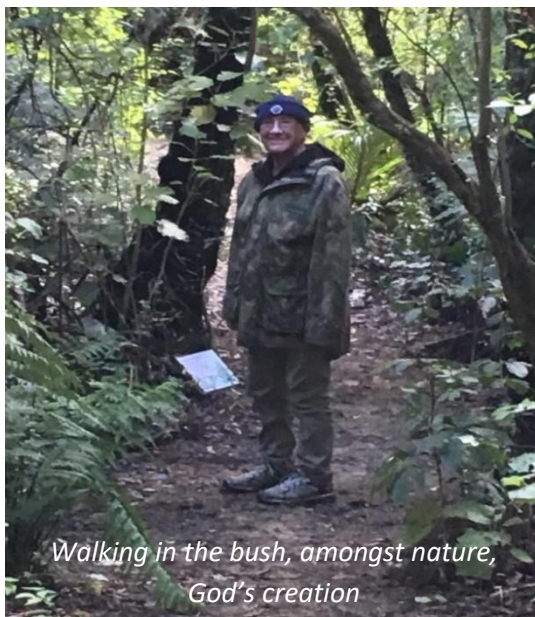


Our Grandchildren – in Arizona

I like to play a round of golf most Tuesday mornings, just to get out and be amongst nature and friends. Looking in creeks and up trees .. for my clubs! Also sometimes achieve a good score, and I meet lots of nice people, some even play with me more than once!

I hear Holy Spirit talking while I am working in the gardens. As I see the growth, plants responding to the discipline of nature, I am in awe of another discipline at work altogether for the seeds and plants. Sometimes I like to walk and talk with other men in the neighbourhood or in the church.

Man on man! We men are solving the world's problems, if only someone would listen. I love to walk, especially amongst trees forests and reserves which are so attainable, locally.



*Walking in the bush, amongst nature,
God's creation*



Ham I won at golf

Whanganui

NFP

After 50 years of accounting and finance work, I have a reluctance to get involved in providing financial services to the community, even though groups and members are most anxious to obtain that sort of expertise.

I am a member of a Trust which provides financial accounting and audit/review for Not for Profit Organisations (like community centres or sports clubs, etc). Contractors to the Trust also help with conversion of accounting systems to Xero (accounting package) and reconciling Xero transactions, at the detailed level. The Trust provides these services at a reduced rate for the organisation and is usually working with Trustees on system improvements and the like. After all, why should a large percentage grant and sponsorship funds be used for non-productive activities such as audit and or reviews? The Trust meets four times each year, and the Trustees review the work undertaken, and provide direction to the Operations Manager for new development work, training and education, and extension into other relevant territories.

I am a member of a Trust which provides low-socio-economic accommodation to those in need. Part of the Trust work has been to provide assistance to the Operations Manager to quit uneconomic but parallel activities, and also to consider extending the premises to provide for more similar housing solutions in the area. The Trust is concerned with the financial base and the use of it, as opposed to service provision. One issue here is the work-load on the Operations Manager. The requirements of 24/7 service for this type of clientele has its pressures on mental and physical stability of Operations who constantly need good and efficient executive assistants for the accommodation and for the clients.

The third Board which I am involved with is as a Financial Advisor. My role here is to train interested staff members to prepare the financial accounts each month for the Board. As competencies develop, it is hoped that the financials can be delegated to other staff and the reconciliations and reporting completed “down the line”. This monthly advisory and support work is progressing slowly. The Trust provides garden plots and training in gardening for its members. They also show members partners how to harvest vegetables and even prepare them for meals. I think the Trust is moving onto providing Te Reo (Maori language development) and even building skills for the local community. Much work is required in governance, as a good leadership and management model is needing to be developed and accepted.

At the commencement of our time in Whanganui, I was asked to be a financial adviser to a Board which provides social help and support to the community. My assessment found that there was no management controls over the cash receipting and payments, and the Board Members didn’t seem to know much about the requirements for managing that area of the Board. I developed a simple receipts and payments process with reconciliations and controls using Excel. However the Manager was unhappy with Excel as a package, and the system I proposed was not implemented. I withdrew from advising that Board.

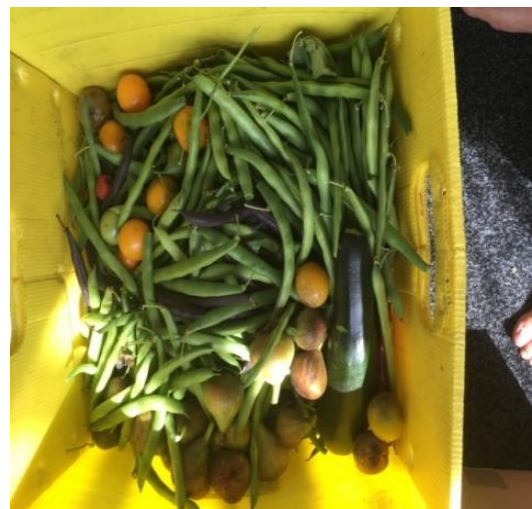


Thinking, meditating and giving financial advice to Boards (those who will listen!).

Gardening

I have always been a keen gardener. From my first married days I have tried to provide for my family through fruit and vegetables. This was a skill from my father, who provided likewise and shared his skills and experience with me in like manner. I think that working in a garden helped me relax and cope with the stresses of office work in Central Government!

I have stated previously that when we shifted from Kapiti, I had transplanted many bushes, veges, and fruit trees. These were in Castlecliff awaiting our settling in to our new home. Well, as we shifted into our new home, and started putting potted plants in their new locations in Whanganui, the man in front came over to me. He welcomed us to his locality and he observed that I was a keenish gardener. I agreed with his assessment. He asked if I would like an allotment to grow vegetables in. I excitedly agreed, and he said that he would rotary hoe ¼ acre for my use just across the road.



Vegetables being harvested from our allotment – things grow in Whanganui!

We had a man come into our home to cut down trees which we didn't want and to mulch the residue. One was a cabbage tree by our letter box, very native tree, but one which drops flax-type leaves which wrap themselves around lawn mower blades and make a blockage and a mess. That tree and its entrails went! The contractor left us a truck load of mulch from the work he did on our section, which we spread over the local garden edges and covered with blood and bone mixture for the transferred bulbs, daisies, and fruit trees.

The contractor worked on trees and mulching around the Whanganui area. It cost him to deposit the mulch in the "tip", the recycle and disposal centre ("tip" was the old name for the area...when I was young, in Kaikorai Valley). I talked with him and received two truck (little) loads of mulch for free dumped in the allotment. With quite a few wheelbarrow loads from myself and from friends, I covered my allotment with 6-8 inches of mulch and spread blood and bone over the lot. My intention was to develop a "no dig" garden.

In that first year I planted potatoes in long rows, and furrow these as they grew in the mulch. At harvest time, there wasn't a huge crop of large or small potatoes (Jersey Bennies), but we enjoyed the experience of eating what we got. As it was July, I also planted in long rows some broad beans. Slightly late for them, but they came up, they grew, I staked them(!) and they flowered and produced a large

number of beans in the pod. We later picked the beans, podded and froze them (Dawn's area) and cut down the bean stalks which I cut into lengths and buried in the mulched garden.

I grew lettuces and cabbages interchanged. These came up and swelled without turning to seed. They liked the mulch and the fertilizer of blood and bone on them. These latter plants kept us in veges - salads and coleslaw (Dawn) the whole summer. Through the middle of summer and towards the end, I had great crops of dwarf and climbing beans (not Scarlet Runners as they were stringy and not nice to eat), which we distributed to those in the neighbourhood and the needy. We (Dawn) also preserved and froze a lot. I provided our tomatoes (Red Money Maker and Beefsteak) through an aquaculture system next to the house (getting warmth and sun from that location) which we had brought up with us from Kapiti.



Dawn on the wheelbarrow.



Uncle Kevin with some figs from the allotment.

The vegetable allotment across the road from our house seemed to be very easy to develop and maintain. It was fenced from animals and prying visitors. The maintenance was minimal, say two hours per week average to weed and loosen up with the mulch base, which gradually started to combine with and into the soil as stuff grew and was turned over. It should be noted that the weather over the growing period, I am describing (July – Feb), was very temperate with regular doses of water. Whanganui weather was and is so well suited to plant growing!!

The Holy Spirit was telling me what to grow, when to grow, and whom to give it to at harvest. I spent many an hour listening and obeying, but also just amazing at His provision. For me, it was awesome to see the goodness of the plant come up from the seeds, through the soil, up through the stalk and leaves to the flower and seed pod on the top. I viewed the seeds popping out through the ground at their appointed time for the season, develop into seedlings, grow and sometimes multiply, seeing the veins in the leaves, different plants with different shades of green, turning towards the sun for maximum energy. I marvelled continuously at God and His creation.

I planted seeds and small plants, and I often noticed subsequently that they had been dug up and spread out all over the ground. On investigation and after discussion with Ian, my gardening neighbour, I assessed that the seeds and young plants were being uprooted and eaten by both Pukekos and sometimes blackbirds. Oh dear. All my work, hopes and dreams!?! From then on I planted seeds and covered them with small wired netting sheets; the plants with sheets of larger wire netting. Yeah; we won.

Dawn and I both gave thanks and honour to Holy Spirit as the vegetables and nearby fruit came to maturity. We harvested and I often peeled them, and Dawn preserved a cupboard full of fruit and vegetables without going through a supermarket. We knew what we had grown. We knew the largely organic methods used in growing. We stored for the months ahead and for people who visited us or who had come to our attention as being in need. We shared generously with the latter group as the Lord suggested to us. Often we would take a carton of cabbages, beans, or silverbeet to church on a weekly basis, and they would all be taken to various homes. Raises the issue of urban Maori's ability to grow and feed themselves ..??

As the season developed, my development of the garden moved into seed growing and then planting. To grow from seed proved to me to be a lot cheaper to bring forth plants. Just a few seeds in a tray at a time. These needed care and protection, and I used a protected environment in my garage to grow trays, water frequently, and repot into six-packs at the appropriate time.

I now have a small glass house with shelves for the trees. It was purchased from the Warehouse and erected by my grandson. There I grow the plants for seed and six-packs. The six-packs of vegetables were a hit with neighbours and with growers in the church community who wanted to develop their own gardens and were very happy to get started with plants. Vegetables like silverbeet, kale, broccoli, cabbage, beetroot and tomatoes were freely shared with those who showed an interest.

The plants went into the allotment for the second season of growing, with a bit of general fertilizer amongst the mulch. Oh, we shared heaps of rhubarb which grew in the allotment, all the way from Kapiti.



Working in the garden.



Carrots!

Volunteering

One of the many assets one has when one is retired, is time. Now time can be used in many ways for the development of the retiree or for rest, sleep, watching TV, reading, and generally growing “retired” and tired.

In addition to some of the minimal financial activities I have engaged in as a volunteer, I made it a point to become involved in other physical activities completely different to the financial activities of my past 50 years.

I have already advised that I enjoyed gardening; so it was somewhat logical that I would drift into working on and with the land as I had time. One of my first tasks was to weed and develop a neighbour’s garden ready for him to plant some of his Kumara. The neighbour had a sore back and was undergoing treatment for his prostate. Dawn and I spent almost a day clearing his garden and digging it over ready for his planting. We filled a trailer with the weeds and transferred them to a section for weed storage over by the airport.

The next opportunity was with one of our Maori brethren families. They had just been transferred into a state owned house with a decent sized section. The section was overgrown, and they weren’t quite sure what to do with the section. First we planted some fruit trees along the fence line, for future years, to harvest and enjoy. With them we dug over three patches for vegetable plants. Peas and tomatoes along the fence, pumpkins in the back corner, potatoes and beans in the area beside the garden shed. We prayed for successful production as we sowed. Showed them how and where and when to weed. Advised them to put sheep pellets around the plants (which they didn’t manage to do as, I think, it was too hard for them), and showed them how to stake tomatoes and beans. I have observed the gardens and the plants (the plants needed little or no care) are growing well. The silverbeet is a special prolific source of food for the family and their whanau. Another season is imminent!



Volunteer working with neighbour in garden.

The most enjoyable volunteer work Dawn and I got involved with was working each Monday for a day in the local Heritage Seed Trust and associated property. Now the Trust has about ten acres of viable orchard, two glass or tunnel houses, and a self-contained secure shade house. The property is fully organic. The fruit and vegetable crops are grown almost specifically for seed. The seed can be traced back generations in the various heritage lines to preferred clean seed, free of hybridisation and chemical treatment.

The **Heritage Food Crops Research Trust** is a charitable trust, established to research the **early prevention and treatment** of disease through the medicinal properties of plant-based food and natural **plant-based medicine**.

The Trust's apples are developed by both seed and by grafting. The varieties are proven to fight cancer. The wheat is in the self-contained area to facilitate research and conclusions without cross-pollination; this wheat crop is also developed and maintained without hybridisation. The tomatoes are also pre-hybridisation. The seed has been sourced from overseas. The tomato fruit is orange in colour, and also is proven to have cancer-prevention qualities. The Trust also grows and develops other crops including peaches, plums, corn, beetroot, etc.

There are about twenty volunteers (including Dawn and I) who work on the property most Mondays. The volunteers packet different seeds, sow plants and seeds, distribute plants and seeds (free of charge (the organisation is a Not for Profit)). We weed and clear weeds from sections of the orchard, plant and pick beans, graft trees, cut down and burn overgrown trees, and mow lawns. There is a rumour that the operations manager is also director of convolvulus for the New Zealand area. This rumour has not been confirmed, however there is much growing around the orchard and the apple and fruit trees!

The work of the volunteers (including Dawn and I) represents good and varied physical work. The most interesting aspect of this venture for us is the visitors who come to look around. We listen to visitors from all around the world who, in one way or another, have an interest in heritage crops in their own lands. Most of the participants believe and behave as if plants were the first line in medicine.

In return for our work, Dawn and I get access to special seeds and plants for our own gardens. The Trust is very generous with its entire inventory. It distributes about 15,000 free tomato plants each year through the local market, and all surplus apple trees are distributed on an as-requested basis. There are no sales of seeds or of plants, but sometimes help is expected with distribution. This gives Dawn and I, amongst others, a very good supply of different stuff for growing on and for sharing. With sharing amongst the volunteers, we both get very good introductions to the community and to community groups.

In conclusion, I also do some random volunteer work for an elderly couple down the road from us. The husband is developing Alzheimers, is becoming forgetful and needs a secure environment. I go down to their place and spend time with him so that his wife can go out to the shops or elsewhere. What I do is called respite care. I discuss early days with him, which he remembers with great precision and accuracy (Wahine Day storm). I don't talk God with either of them yet, but a time will come when we can share. I pray for them both when I am with them, and when I am walking to their place. It is

not physical work, but can be very interesting discussions as I learn of his early years and some of his experiences. Lots of listening on my part, and open ended questions to get a conversation going. He doesn't remember what he had for breakfast that day.

Viniculture

Dawn and I have spent time with Matt and Sara in Martinborough which is a wine-growing area north of Wellington. We helped them physically in the vineyard with physical things like pruning, thinning, and even harvesting in their first year of operation. Dawn was great on the tractor! But driving was not my scene. In subsequent seasons we met with his buyers and his winemakers. Our role has been very interested supporters as and when we can. Some of the things Matt does on the vineyard (like fertilizer) have been a help on our Whanganui allotment. We're both proud of Matt and Sara as we see him develop from a vineyard manager, to an investor, and now a marketer.

Te Puna O Wai Ora : Fountain of Living Beings

Dawn and I visited several churches in the region, and we discussed with God where He wanted us to attend. We looked closely at returning back to the Roman Catholic Church, but the following reasons precluded such a move. The sole authority of Scripture is a unique principle, as revealed by the Holy Spirit. We are both fully saved and will enter with Him in Heaven immediately on our death after we gave Him our lives (2 Cor 5:17), and Christ died for our sins once and for all according to scripture, and that He was buried and He rose again (1 Cor 15:3-4). These foundational truths were not found in Catholicism, with its reliance on tradition, works for goodness, and repeated sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin which now could appropriate at past present and even future masses.

(Ref: A Woman Rides the Beast, by Dave Hunt Harvest House 1994.)

We both found that the Maori based church in Gonville was the most suited for our walk with God. Six pastors leading and directing, and about ten deacons working the church and its many activities. There is a youth group meeting sometimes separately, and also a children's church each Sunday. The church meets every day of the week except Saturday. Full and active participation is expected. Monday is for new Christians, Tuesday Youth, Wednesday Kai Iwi Home Group, Thursday Church Prayer and Music Groups Practise, and Friday Church Individual Prophecy, Praise and Prayer. The church pastors have both local and national responsibilities. The church includes Israel in its prayer and intercession.

The members of the church welcomed us into their midst, but do not visit us in our home very often. The worship is heart-felt, very encouraging and supportive worshippers in and beside the worship group. After time and suggestions from us, there is time for prophecy to and with the church. Not recorded and reflected on and feedback as yet. It is great to be alongside the worship, jointly singing our hearts to God; sometimes in tongues. Tongues is the language of our spirits. Speakers to the church I would rank as ordinary. I have suggested a range of known spirit-moved speakers to come into the church and speak, to give the members the best possible experiences and encouragement, but there seems to be movement to work with "what we've got".

The above judgmental statement is made from our experience with some churches in which there is no doubt that the Spirit is moving. Don't we want this for all our people? Especially those in Te Puna

O Wai Ora? It should be noted that the leaders have national and indigenous church responsibilities also.



Most of the Te Puna O Wai Ora Worship Group out front leading in song.

Dawn and I were asked to be pastors in the church. This would have given us authority and respect, but because of our age and our outside background, we refused the honour. It made sense to me to operate with pastoral or spirit-filled authority, as all members of the church could and should, but not to actually be one. Many structural and hierarchical issues for the church members and hierarchy, here! We decided not to be part of the controlling body, to colonise as it were, but to educate from our lives and experience. We both preferred to encourage and support and see the church members grow and in turn the church elders grow also. (Refer: "Cry the Wounded Land, by Mark Holloway".)

Dawn and I have been teaching with 9-10 church members, mostly to deacons but not necessarily. Dawn taught Bible basics with them all, I covered gifts and movements in the spirit. Dawn's group all came through with confidence with tongues. This is important as English and Te Reo is the language of the body, while tongues are the language of the spirit.

I bought people through into prophecy and gifts of knowledge. We practised gifts of knowledge and prophecy with and on one another weekly until each member came to rely on their ability to hear the Holy Spirit and act with Him. Time was also spent practising taking the prophetic Word into each and everyone's spirit, and appropriating the presence of Jesus singly and individually. He is the Word.

Much of the words received were committed to writing and studied together as a group before sharing. We tried to discourage "preaching" in and around the prophetic words received, in some cases this wasn't successful as some people cherished the opportunity for standing out in front and being able to talk and be listened. This is not the role of prophetic ministry. We discussed with the church pastors and got their acceptance to include a session in the Sunday church liturgy for prophetic words to be shared with the church, officially.

This year we covered teaching on Matthew 6 about forgiveness and sorting things out amongst yourself before coming to God. Interestingly this ended up in a good wee fight amongst church

members which gave them a great opportunity to put what they learned from the bible study into practice.

We managed to introduce two external spirit-filled speakers into the church cycle. The first external member was Pr. Ian MacCormack. Ian was an old-friend and a previous pastor of ours.

He was night diving off the island of Mauritius when he was stung by five Box Jellyfish, which are among the most venomous creatures in the world. Ian is not 100% sure which species of Box Jellyfish stung him as it has been very hard to find info from Mauritius on them. He died from the stings, he went to heaven, spent time with Jesus, and then came back to earth. He shares his testimony and beyond as he itinerates around the South Pacific now."

We had Ian give two testimony talks to the church and the public in Whanganui. He spoke in Central Baptist Church, a large one in the centre of town, and he also spoke at (Castle)cliff Life Church out by the beach. His talk was his life after death oriented; He gave altar calls at the end of both, which were well attended by church members and he was able to pray personally for most who came forward.

On the last morning we had Ian spend time with members of our church on a "question and answer" or "get to know him" session. Unfortunately that "church members' only session" was completely dominated at the end by personal questions and discussions from a visitor to the church; so much for our quiet and reticent learners! Ian spoke in answer to a question from the senior pastor at the commencement of the "get to know him" meeting about having the presence of God in our churches. The question from the senior pastor was his experience and observations on churches which demonstrated manifestly the presence of God amongst the service and the members.

Ian answered him from the bible about the five-fold ministry and the need for church leadership to comprise those people and those gifts in the leadership group. He recommended that the leaders looked into establishing that management process as a model for God's presence and for His manifest presence.

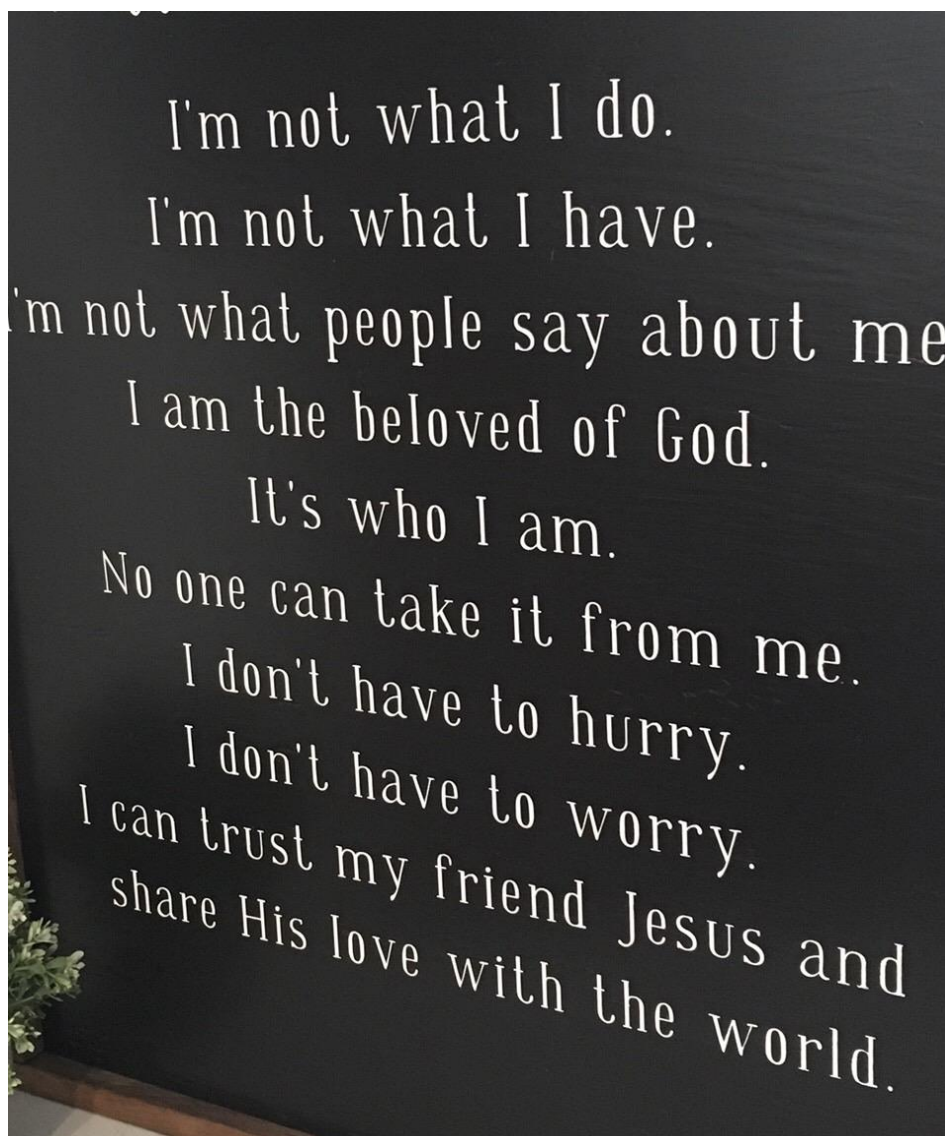


Ian spending time with a member of Te Puna O Wai Ora Church.

This current year, we managed to get Rodney Francis, a recognised prophet from the Kapiti to come up and share his life and gifts and books on a Sunday. His talk was well received and he encouraged the members to continue on developing their walks in the spirit. He was a great support and confirmation to the leaders. His altar call was well responded to; so people were able to leave the church with God's love on them.

I have spoken in other churches as a guest teacher, mainly going over my work on Octavius Hadfield and the spiritual revival work which was a feature of church in 1850-60 in the Kapiti region. I have written articles in the local newspapers on behalf of the church, but no feedback from that publishing and sharing.

Dawn and I both go to a combined church intercessors meeting at Central Baptist Church. This is great being amongst such a group of holy prayers. I often sense our presence in the Holy of Holies, with Jesus seated beside His Father. They show their pleasure at this group's humility. They include members of the group in intercession with things for the nation and for the city which are on their hearts. The power and presence of God is such a privilege to be amongst.



In Summary Then : By Way of Wrap Up

- Satisfying: Harvesting plants and fruit grown by my own hands, and sharing them with the needy.
- Thrilling: Observing young church members “reaching out” in the gifts of the spirit.
- Agreeable: Listening to people express their opinions on subjects of interest to me.
- Grateful: People spending time with me and finishing a two-way conversation.
- Exciting: Observing other people attempting projects, and measures of success.
- Good: Overcoming issues, problems and difficulties, and laying them to rest.
- Peace: Being in harmony with Dawn, in what she thinks and what she achieves.
- Happy: Being loved by the presence of Holy Spirit, and His words of support.
- Pleasing: Being in and around nature – trees, breeze, birds, warmth. Walking.
- Pleasurable: Walking and talking with Dawn, not solving problems but identifying some.
- Welcome: Meeting new people, hearing their stories, being invited into their world.
- Favourable: Peace – Getting on together, jointly; overcoming adversity; reconciliation.
- Congenial: Respect for Dawn, facilitating her walk in life, receiving her acknowledgement.
- Gratifying: Hearing from children and family ... I am alive; they recognise and celebrate with me.
- Pleasant: We attend a church home group each month, named Amazing Grace (I thought it was a spiritual group called Amazing Grace, but it wasn't). We share plants and seeds with one another. We discuss potential disasters and successes. We jointly work on needy people's gardens. We thank God for His goodness.
- 1st Love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – their creation, salvation and redemption. His cross an presence for me.
- 2nd Love: Dawn, the love of my life. Her love and respect and our joy together.
- Delight: Day trips in bus arranged by I-Site into the backblocks of Whanganui district. Commentary by previous residents of life in the rural areas, hills and valleys.
- Fun: Attending rugby finals at Cooks Gardens, \$2 entrance. KFC if I barracked for “Border”. Rivalry off field as well as on, with local songs and haka.
- Regret: Sincere regrets for the children I have offended and hurt. My actions left a traumatic mark on your life, one which I cannot undo and would definitely not redo. Sorry.
- Achilles Heel: Sexuality; my eyes and mind; 24/7.

Summary:

This is the end. I've run out. Reader, I hope this has been of some use and encouragement to you. Thanks are to God and to the promptings of His Holy Spirit. May you know Jesus embrace, as I have known Him!