

TODAY'S SERVICE



P I C T O N Baptist Church

**“While [Joseph and Mary] were [in Bethlehem],
the time came for the baby to be born, and she
gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped
him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because
there was no room for them in the inn.”**

Luke 2:6–7 (NIV)



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- Opening Songs
- Welcome & Notices
- Tithes & Offering
- Singing
- Message
- Singing
- Closing Prayer

✱ If you have any questions or need help, please ask one of the welcomers who will be happy to help you.

✱ If you would like prayer after the service today, ask the people around you or come to the front and someone will pray for you.

✱ A crèche is available down at the foyer. The service is relayed into the room so you are able to listen to it. Please ensure the room is left tidy.

✱ We invite you to stay for a cup of tea after the service.

PASTORAL NOTES

Kia ora! Welcome to our worship this morning. If you are a first-time guest, I encourage you to fill out a blue visitor card and hand it to the welcomers or drop it in one of the offering bags.

Right after the service this morning we are going to have a Church Meeting here in the worship hall. You do not need to attend this meeting if you are visitor; but please do enjoy the cuppa in the foyer.

In our Church Meeting last Nov 25th we had a meaningful conversation and sharing time about our Church's outreach to the wider Picton community. Many good ideas and comments emerged from that conversation. The Eldership will be prayerfully looking at these and in due course will update the Church Family. Watch this space!

It's only this week that I learned the meaning of the word Waikawa, where our Church building is located and where many of our members live. I met someone on Friday who told me that “waikawa” means “bitter water.” But in fact the true meaning, according to P. M. Ryan's *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Maori*, is “bitter,

acid, rough mat.” Perhaps some of you know the aetiology of this name, in which case please let me know.

I'm reminded that in the Old Testament, Naomi (in the book of Ruth) gave herself the name Mara, a Hebrew word which means “bitter,” because of the hardships she went through. In Numbers 15:22–26 “mara” was also used to name the place in the wilderness where the Israelites sojourned, because the water of that place was bitter and the Israelites could not drink it.

My purpose in talking about the meaning of Waikawa is simply to illustrate my need – our need – to appreciate the past and the present of this place and the people who lived and continue to live here, so we can have a richer, more informed relationship with the people we live amongst.

None of us would deduce that residents of Waikawa are more “bitter” than residents of the Picton township, just as we don't deduce that the people of the Bay of Plenty are all wealthy and the people of Poverty Bay are all poor. But we are reminded that life is not always pleasant and easy; sometimes life is bitter. But we need not become bitter when life gets bitter.

For one thing, when we you look at Waikawa on a physical level, we don't see bitterness and suffering. We see nice houses and quite a number of expensive houses. People are living well. But the bitterness may be on the inner, spiritual level, where people are lonely and isolated, not just from one another but also from God. But then that can well be said of other places, too.

I have said enough about the Picton Christmas Parade last weekend; I won't add anything else except to note that some people have expressed to me what they see as a growing unity and connectedness of the Christian Churches, and from my experience the recent Combined Churches float is a proof of that.

We're currently going through an Advent series here at PBC to help enrich our personal, family and Church celebrations of Christ's birth. Last Sunday we looked at the annunciation of Christ's birth to Mary (Luke 1:26–38), and we focused on the themes of grace (favour) and faith. Mary was highly favoured because God chose her to be the mother of Christ. But that favour came at a huge personal cost on Mary (and on Joseph, too). But she allowed God's plan to prevail

in her life, and by doing so she became an epitome of faith for all of us.

This morning we're going to look at Luke 2:1–7, which recounts the birth of Christ. We focus today on the theme of God's humility, Christ's humility. Advent is all about God humbling Himself to the lowest levels possible in order to restore us, free us from sin, and restore our true worth in Him. I have included below a very helpful reflection on pride and humility.

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Excerpted and adapted from the C. S. Lewis Institute
www.cslewisinstitute.org

Pride is a universal human problem. Everyone suffers from it to some degree. When we have exalted ourselves in pride, God does not want to punish us and bring us low but rather to forgive and restore us. He says again and again in Scripture, humble yourselves, and I will exalt you. This gives us hope and encouragement. God takes pleasure in our efforts to humble ourselves, and He loves to bless and exalt the humble. For just as pride is the root of all sin, so "humility is the root, mother, nurse, foundation, and bond of all virtue," as John Chrysostom once remarked.

Admittedly, humility and the humbling of oneself is out of fashion in today's world and seems unappealing to most of us. However, as Jonathan Edwards said, "We must view humility as one of the most essential things that characterizes true Christianity." Our perspective on humility can be radically changed if we will ponder and meditate on the greatest example of humility in history: Jesus Christ. By the very act of leaving heaven, coming to earth, and taking the form of man, he demonstrated an unfathomable humbling of Himself. Throughout His life on earth, Jesus demonstrated a spirit of profound humility, saying that He came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). On his last night with the disciples, He took a towel and basin and washed their dirty feet (John 13:1–11), instructing them to follow his example of servanthood with one another (John 13:12–17). Andrew Murray captures it well, "Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself

in the garb of meekness and gentleness, to win and serve and save us."

How do we gain the mind of Christ and humble ourselves? To put on the mind of Christ, we will need to make a firm decision to ponder, understand, and adopt Jesus' way of thinking; His values and attitudes must become ours. His strong emphasis on humility and meekness and His example of it must take hold of our thinking, our desires and our conduct. We must admire His humility and want it for ourselves.

For this to happen, we need to earnestly and regularly pray for the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, for it is impossible to do it in our own strength. We will also need to understand what Jesus meant when He called men and women to humble themselves. We discover that from the Greek word Jesus and the apostles used, *tapeinos*, which conveys the idea of having a right view of ourselves before God and others. If pride is an exalted sense of who we are in relation to God and others, humility is having a realistic sense of who we are before God and others. We must not think too highly (or too lowly) of ourselves. Rather, we must be honest and realistic about who and what we are.

NOTICES

Carols in the Mall

This is an outreach event of the Combined Churches to be held inside the main entrance of the Mariners Mall on 21st Dec (Friday). There will be 3 rounds of carols: 12:00–12:30pm, 3:00–3:30pm, and 5:30–6:00pm. Join us to celebrate and proclaim Christ's birth!

Children's Christmas Party

On 22nd Dec (Sat) at 3–4pm here at the Church. We expect a number of children (and their parents) from the wider community to attend.

Home Groups Update

- The Tuesday evening group hosted by Stu and Ralphia is now on a break. Date of resumption to be announced.
- The Tuesday evening group hosted by Pene is still in recess.
- The Tuesday morning group at Pene's will have their last meeting for the year next week (the 11th at 10am) and will regroup next year on 15th Jan.

- The Thursday evening group hosted by Steve and Sue will have their final meeting for the year on Thursday (the 13th at 7pm) and will resume next year on 7th February.

Any Prayer Requests?

If you have any prayer request for the prayer chain, contact Judith Dodge at 573 9245.

ROSTERS*

Hosting

2nd Dec..... Bill & Mary Pettigrew (Communion)
9th Dec..... A Woolf & L Price
16th Dec..... Nelson & Judith Dodge (Communion)
23rd Dec..... Stu & Ralphia Henderson
30th Dec..... L Young & N Davis (Communion)

Music & Sound

2nd Dec: Allison Le Heux (leading), Ana Woolf (keyboard), Kirsty Baldwin (singer), Bill Pettigrew (projector), Andy Baldwin (sound)

9th Dec: Garry Stanley (leading), Jonathan Duffy (guitar), Bronwyn Duffy (keyboard), Allison Le Heux (singer), Lynette Stanley (projector), Steve Lavers (sound)

16th Dec: Guan (leading), Graham Galbraith (keyboard), Gyllian Macdonald (projector), Steve Lavers (sound)

23rd Dec: Gwenda Galbraith (leading), Graham Galbraith (keyboard), Jude Stretton (singer), Te Mara Riwaka (projector)

30th Dec: Allison Le Heux (leading), Ana Woolf (keyboard), Kirsty Baldwin (singer), Bill Pettigrew (projector), Andy Baldwin (sound)

*If the date doesn't suit please arrange a swap with others on the roster.