

Weave us together to
Proclaim Life

Weekly Blog



Greetings Te Haahi Weteriana, tēnā koutou katoa,

Lent is like a cocoon. You go in a caterpillar and come out a butterfly and in between the “going in” and “coming out” a lot happens...

This is the opening of the Lenten reflection prepared by Rev Motekiai Fakatou for this week’s blog. At the time that Motekiai wrote his reflection, we had no idea that a few weeks later, we would all be going into lockdown.

As we begin this period a group of Church Leaders will meet Government members. This will be our opportunity to thank the Prime Minister and all members of parliament for the excellent provision they are making for working people, employees and mortgages. Also, for taking the decisive action they have taken so quickly.

While being in lockdown and isolation might be difficult, it could be that while we are locked down we have time to re-focus on what is important in our lives. We will have time to be still in the presence of God. God’s presence was grounded not only in scripture but in creation. Creation is on-going. It is now. It is the outpouring of the love of God which is essential to sustain us. Even though we are overwhelmed by the situation we and the whole world finds itself in, we need to be reminded that it may also be a time for some positive changes. Changes that will enable the earth to breathe, to put children in touch with long forgotten values, for our society to slow down and to be re-born into a new form of co-existence where we take people into consideration and let them breathe again.

As we begin this period of uncertainty, may we be mindful of those who are in lockdown in overcrowded homes and accommodation, at risk of family violence and tensions within families and flats where people are not used to being confined together. Of the families that need to use foodbanks, in a time when the supply has dried up as others stockpile food. We encourage you to seek ways of food sharing and donating to help those in need.

We ask you all as members of the family of Te Haahi Weteriana to support one another in every way we can, especially those who are most vulnerable, through age or underlying conditions. We ask you to pray for the sick, those caring for them and for those in positions of responsibility with difficult decisions to make. Please pray for our country, our Prime Minister and government leaders and remember the entire human family in your prayers as we together face this global pandemic.

Let us be encouraged to put our trust in the Living Creator God. Let us not forget Jesus who is with us to the end. “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of age.” Matthew 8:20

We offer our thanks to the Connexional Office staff, the staff of our Missions and Wesley College for ensuring that people are put first. We offer our thanks to all presbyters for the care they are taking to ensure that the work of the church continues – just in a different way, along with our thanks all members of the Church for the care you are taking to ensure that those in your communities know that the church cares for them through the offers of practical help, being in contact and through prayer.

Perhaps we are seeing the answer to this question of Motekiai - How may this new birth come about? Thank you Motekiai for your reflection this week.

Stay safe, be kind, stay home.

’Ofa atu fau, Nga mihi nui.

Setaita and Nicola

The new birth

Lent is like a cocoon. You go in a caterpillar and come out a butterfly and in between the “going in” and “coming out” a lot happens...

We are in the midst of forty days of Lent. It's a significant time for the church to recall the sacrificial life and ministry of Jesus which he demonstrated through healing and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus' ministry culminates with his death and resurrection so that all who trust and believe in him may renew their commitment to Christian discipleship as one may bring the good news of hope and peace.

From the lectionary readings for the second Sunday of Lent, John's gospel chapter 3 talks about a radical way to renew and restore one's life of relationship to God by the *new birth*. Jesus meets Nicodemus at night, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. The Pharisees took a solemn vow before three witnesses that they would give their lives to obeying the ten commandments as a means of pleasing God. Their lives were spent defining specific ways to apply the commandments.

In other words, in the eyes of the Pharisees the commandment is the foundation and source of how to live one's life in relation to God and the world, but it also depends on their own interpretation of the commandments.

Nicodemus seemed to want an abstract theological discussion regarding Jesus' identity, but that was not what he needed. Jesus got to the heart of the matter – Nicodemus' spiritual condition – telling the Pharisee that he must be born again (*the new birth*).

In our technological world, every six months to a year there seems to be a *new birth* of a new product on the market. A few weeks ago, we heard about the new Samsung Galaxy phone S20

series, and many other new technological products flood the market for human convenience and pleasure. But the pressing question to be answered is whether new technology brings solutions for all the despair, hurts, and sorrows in our communities and the world.

Ironically, the new technological gadget claims to focus on convenience and pleasure at the same time it becomes more and more of a means for abuse and violence. So, what or where do we seek to find the solution which brings the new birth that Jesus was on about as he challenges Nicodemus?

Throughout the Lenten season there will be challenges from all aspects of life, from work, home, church, and on a personal level, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But we are encouraged by John 3:15 “... *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*”

So, in spite of our technological, physical, emotional, or spiritual world the gospel reminds us during this Lenten season that the new birth is necessary for the kingdom of God to be present. How may this new birth come about?

Just like a cocoon – going in a caterpillar, coming out a butterfly – this new birth is a state of transforming hearts and minds in the life of Christ's followers by the power of the Holy Spirit which demonstrates in words and actions to bring peace and justice to all creation.

May the power of the spirit continue to dwell in us all as we prepare to celebrate Christ's death and resurrection. Through faith and trust in the power of the resurrected Christ, God's kingdom will be experienced – which is peace in the midst of war, and joy in the midst of despair.

**Rev Motekiai Fakatou
Presbyter, Wesley Wellington Parish**

Prayer for the week

May the Lord listen to the united prayer of all of His disciples who are preparing themselves to celebrate the victory of the Risen Christ.

God of love and infinite mercy, creator of all that has life,
we bring our woundedness to the heart of your compassion
and pray for healing for one another and the earth.

Touch us with your grace, in the name of Christ the beloved.

Amen.