Kia ora e te whanau

In our increasingly hyper-polarised political environment, I'm struck by the Gospel text for this coming Sunday where, rather than co-opting Jesus to their political perspective, the extremes coalesce in opposition to Jesus. Our General Election is now three weeks away. Our tendency is to conscript Jesus to defend our politics of the left and right. If the Gospel is any guide, we might consider carefully, perhaps not so much 'where' we're standing, but 'how'.

Leadership & Personal Development Resources

The Science Of Storytelling — 10 Tips For Turning Complexity Into Compelling Narratives

Storytelling is central to ministry. While I took a homiletics class at Theological College back in the 1980s, I don't remember any attention being given to the art, or science, of storytelling. This excellent Forbes article does a deep dive into how a story needs to be developed and shared. While it does it in the business context, the issues we ultimately face are the same. We all live in a story, our lives are stories, and its well told stories that offer the possibility of transformational change. The last point made (No 10), is one I strongly resonate with – *Don't rely too heavily on AI* **–** and comments**:** *Trust is what human storytelling builds. A whiff of AI can burn that trust in an instant.* The article can (hopefully) be accessed here: https://www.forbes.com/sites/andreamorris/2026/07/09/the-science-of-storytelling-10-tips-for-turning-complexity-into-compelling-narratives/

Your brain is lying to you — and so is theirs

'Your brain's job is to keep you comfortable, not to help you grow.' This opening line sets the tone for what is to follow. Well worth spending some time with in self-reflection, this article lays out the most common ways we sell ourselves short, and allow those around us to do the same. The category headings may whet your appetite to take a serious look: *Your brain is built for safety, not growth; The craving that isn't really hunger; The effort that gets cut short; The risk that gets talked out of existence; and The story that says "I'm not good enough".* It doesn't leave us without hope and offers some useful strategies in how to 'flip the script.' The article can be accessed here: https://www.smartbrief.com/original/your-brain-is-lying-to-you-and-so-is-theirs

Via Negativa: The Stop-Drop-Roll Method Behind Systematic Subtraction

This article starts by observing that as we face a challenge, our cognitive default is to add more – often to an already over-stuffed life. As the clock runs down on my time with UCANZ, I'm contemplating the possibility that I may be moving into some form of retirement at the end of this year. The whole premise behind this article speaks to the space I'm currently in. It may be you are too.

I've been asked what I will do next. My response has been, and is: "I'm open to anything interesting, or nothing. My father was dead 5 years beyond where I am now. I'm not interested in tedium". I'm willing to be in a space of 'not knowing' what comes next. I've long remembered one of my favourite authors, I think it was psychiatrist Irvin Yalom, suggesting that every choice we make tends to have the effect of excluding all other possibilities. Panicking about having 'something' rather than nothing, opens the door to that which could be sub-optimal. I don't want that. The underpinning image of this article is that of the sculptor – taking away what's not required – reminding us of Michelangelo who reputedly said *"Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it."*

So, being willing to declutter my life, stripping unnecessary stuff away, and allowing what's important to emerge, is the next challenge. The article can be accessed here: https://www.forbes.com/sites/nelldebevoise/2026/08/18/via-negativa-the-stop-drop-roll-method-behind-systematic-subtraction/

11 Years Ago Today, McDonald's Made a Very Big Change. Here's the Key Lesson to Learn

What could we possibly learn from McDonald's? In some ways, this article is an illustration of the trap the previous article references. Short, simple, with an easily accessible message the article can be accessed here: https://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/11-years-ago-today-mcdonalds-made-a-very-big-change-heres-the-key-lesson-to-learn/91415190

Homilies and Preaching Resources

My response to the lectionary Gospel for the 18th of October – based on Matthew 22 vs 15-22 is titled '*The Enemy of my Enemy'.* Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees and the Herodians (who are not friends) – working together with a 'gotcha' question in order to trap him. The homily can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi0PWy5sm1s

Gospel Conversations - out of the Dunedin Anglican Diocese. They host a conversation of (usually) 4 Theologians / Practitioners. The site with all its options can be accessed here: https://www.calledsouth.org.nz/gospel-conversations/

Led by Michael Godfrey, rather than the Gospel text, this year they are generally focusing on other parts of the Lectionary. The 'conversation' for the coming Sunday the 18th of October is based on Jeremiah 8 vs 22 – 9 vs 3. To quote, they 'reflect on Jeremiah's invitation to lament — to sit with pain and grief rather than rushing too quickly towards easier, more positive answers. They ask whether owning our faults and grieving for our world can help us become companions in healing, justice and love. Can we create safe spaces where others can bring their pain?' The conversation can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwEOOkEi2gA

Rev Darryn Hickling (Methodist colleague leading the Rolleston Project) is on leave. No Instagram post this week.

Again, it will help broaden all our reach if you '**subscribe**' and '**like**'.

Once again, use the videos as you will.

Finally

As always, if you find you'd prefer not to receive this weekly newsletter, please let me know and your address will be removed.

Ngā manaakitanga

Andrew Doubleday

UCANZ Ministry Facilitator

Uniting Congregations
OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND