

Kia ora e te whanau

I've been struggling with the Facebook hatefulness of my fellow Christians when their view of what constitutes 'Biblical Truth' is under threat – at least in their minds. I'm left wondering what kind of God it is people claim to worship when they let rip with the most awful invective – all in the cause of defending this God and his word, as they interpret it. Part of my struggle, is that they are also me – from time to time. I don't always come out covered in glory.

This last Sunday at our local, we sang Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's carol "I heard the Bells on Christmas Day". Longfellow was both an ardent abolitionist and pacifist. Nevertheless, his son signed up to fight in the American Civil War. He was shot and seriously wounded. As his family nursed him over that Christmas of 1864, Longfellow scribed the words of his carol. Its original version has 7 stanzas. The imagery of 4 & 5 are particularly focussed on the war then going on - they are rarely included today. What remains still speaks to us in our context. I include the first and last two stanza's for your edification (apologies for the non-inclusive language – it was the product of its time).

1. I heard the bells on Christmas day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

6. And in despair I bowed my head  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

7. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail  
With peace on earth, good will to men."

As Christmas draws closer, in the midst of all its busyness, may you find times where Longfellow's hope in God is reflected in your living.

### **Leadership & Personal Development Resources**

#### **The Secret to Change isn't Procedural, it's Psychological**

I was struck by a line in this article: 'Continuity is the psychological counterweight to upheaval.' The author recognises that change invariably brings with it a measure of discomfort, and often resistance – even from those who believe in the change and its necessity. It's important to recognise this in the life of the church. People aren't necessarily intent on being obstructive. Yet, when change is mooted there will often be a reaction. Useful tips, including simply acknowledging the issue, are offered in helping us positively process change. The article can be accessed here:

<https://www.fastcompany.com/91453590/change-secret-psychological-leaders>

## **The Invisible Forces Shaping Our Decisions**

This Forbes article considers the unconscious biases that we all have. Not just people in business, I suggest, but also people in churches - no matter that we believe we have the Holy Spirit in our corner. Gamze encourages an openness – to reflecting on our own processes, and exploring alternative ways of seeing. The article can be accessed here:

<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2025/10/17/the-invisible-forces-shaping-our-decisions/>

## **Giant sunspot on par with the one that birthed the Carrington Event has appeared on the sun — and it's pointed right at Earth**

And finally, something from the odd grab bag of the interesting and bizarre – just the ticket to keep you awake at night. You may be aware that A320s world-wide were grounded earlier this month, in order to restore an older software patch to protect the planes from possible sunspot activity.

What this article shows us is that with all the advantages in technology making life better, it has also increases our vulnerability to catastrophic possibilities when things go wrong. This article can be accessed here: <https://www.livescience.com/space/the-sun/giant-sunspot-on-par-with-the-one-that-birthed-the-carrington-event-has-appeared-on-the-sun-and-its-pointed-right-at-earth>

## **Homilies and Preaching Resources**

**My response** to the lectionary for the 21<sup>st</sup> of December is titled '*The Gospel According to Joseph*' - reflecting on the drama of the 'Christmas' narrative found in Matthew 1 vs 18-25, and contrasting it with the narrative we find in Luke. The homily can be engaged with here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbDpM9jGHAw>

**Trevor Hoggard** swings toward a Christmas message for a Carol service in his church. He uses the Gospel text of Luke 1 vs 39-45, where, in their encounter, Trevor draws a contrast in roles between Mary, the soon-to-be mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, even sooner-to-be mother of John the Baptist. Trevor's homily can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8i9T9bwQCi0>

**Gospel Conversations** - out of the Dunedin Anglican Diocese. They host a conversation of 4 Theologians / Practitioners around the Gospel lectionary text for the coming Sunday. The site with all its options can be accessed here: <https://www.calledsouth.org.nz/gospel-conversations/> . The latest 'Conversation' is a 'bonus' for last Sunday (14th) based on the lectionary Gospel of Matthew 11 vs 2-11. It can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wj4DkMPknjU>

They are hoping to also produce a 'Conversation' for this coming Sunday. Keep an eye on the website.

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

