

A PAGE OR TWO FROM PALMERSTON NORTH

(NEW ZEALAND)

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A message from:

**Kent & Rachael
O'Donnell**



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It's been a long time between messages, but I'm glad to be back on the newsletter horse again.

In the absence of a written report during last year I'm going to give a brief overview of the highlights of 2019 before I get into the happenings of the last three months.

2019 IN BRIEF

Jan. Our family camp: Theme: *Hall of Faith* (Heb.11).

Feb. Campaign: Doors knocked 2909; Conversations 1181; Bible studies set 26 (19 during campaign, 6 during follow-up); People to call back on 51.



I wish I could say there were several converts as a result, but alas this wasn't the case. With so many excellent prospects I genuinely thought we'd see at least a couple of new Christians, yet not one obeyed the gospel.

In these situations it's tempting to doubt yourself, question your study tools, or get all suspicious over what some might be saying about the church. However, while an honest assessment may suggest a need for improvement, and even if there is some validity to the thought that warnings about "those church of Christ people" are being circulated; ultimately individuals are responsible to choose for themselves whether to accept or reject the truth (Acts 2:40-41; 13:44, 46; 14:1-4; Rom.6:16-17; cf. Jsh.24:15) - despite how unpolished the presentation may appear to be (cf. 1Cor.2:1-3) - and the church has been spoken against from its beginning (Acts 13:45; 14:2; 19:9; 28:22); so if it's happening to us it's probably a sign we're doing something right, (cf. 2Tim.3:12).

Mar. Chloe's 18th b'day. Cash Collins is born.



Apr. I spoke at the New Plymouth Camp/ L'ship: Theme: *Answering the Tough Questions*. I addressed "How can you believe in miracles and all that nonsense?" & "Why can't women lead in the church?"



Our oldest and longest standing member, Winnie Kerr, passed away.

May. I spoke at the Eastern Shore COC L'ship in Hobart, Australia. My topic was the word *Eucharistia* (thankfulness).

July. Youth group mountain trip.



Aug.-Nov. Our report trip to the US: In 88 days we drove 1000's of miles to 30 different locations, visited 21 congregations, met numerous brethren/friends/others, and had various experiences along the way.

Thank you to everyone that housed, fed, transported, contributed financially, gave nice things, organized fun activities, or in any other way made us feel welcome. Brotherly love, hospitality, and generosity are alive & well in the church! To the congregations that support us, thank you for your sincere interest in our work, and your willingness to continue doing so in the future.

OUTREACH

BAPTISMS

Did you notice the plural? I actually said this last newsletter too, but this time they happened on the same day. Not quite the 3000 of Acts 2, but no less joyful.

Ethan O'Donnell is our son, but as of Feb. 9th, he is now also our brother [pics next page]. We studied the Bible together for about a year, and while it was more sporadic than I would have liked, during that time we noticed a real shift in Ethan's personal development. He completed a building course, got his driver's license, and started a job requiring him to be away from home for most of the week. He was becoming more independent and having to own



his own decisions. All this indicated his choice to become a Christian was a mature commitment rather than a youthful whim. By the way, I certainly recommend you study the gospel with your children before they take this step, even if they have "heard it all before" in sermons & classes etc. It is a good way to determine if they have a mature understanding of spiritual concepts, and perhaps more importantly, they are seeing it in the Scriptures for themselves, rather than being told what to believe. There are many good teaching tools available for this purpose, and I'm more than happy to share with you what I use; just ask.



Note the socks! 😊
(Keeping up the tradition started by Chloe)



↘ Going down into the water.
↗ Ethan makes the good confession.
↙ Buried in baptism.
↘ Much rejoicing in heaven...& the pool!



Adding to an already great day, as I came through the door another one of our youth, Jordan Neall, informed me that he also had decided that morning to be baptized. About 13 years ago my dad studied with & baptized his mum Sue, and I studied with & baptized his dad Malcolm. It's so uplifting to see the fruits of evangelism and sound teaching extending into the next generation.

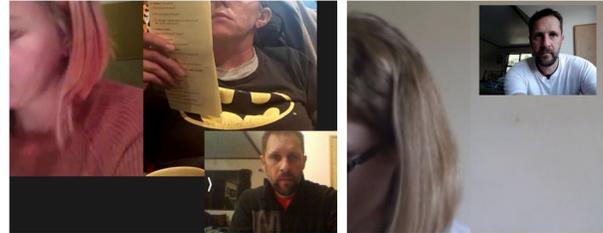


The congregation was very excited at the baptism of these two.

STUDIES

As I mentioned earlier, most of the Bible study contacts I had from last year fizzled out. Some never directly said they wanted to end them, they simply just stopped responding to my messages to set up new appointments. Yet as the saying goes, one door closes and another one opens; recently I have picked up two new studies.

The 1st is with a lady named Anita. She's the sister of Miranda Stanford, a member here in Palmy. Anita lives near the top of the North Is., so we've been studying together via Facebook video. The other is with Katie Neall, who is actually the daughter of Malcom & Sue. Due to this virus lockdown we too have been studying via Facebook video.



Very thankful for technology that allows this.

CAMPAIGN

Among the many other events that have fallen victim to Covid-19 is our May-June campaign in conjunction with FHU. We always enjoy having the students, as it is such an excellent time of work & fellowship. Assuming the NZ govt. opens our borders again to overseas visitors, the plan is to reschedule the campaign to the same dates next year.

CONGREGATION NEWS / CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Thankfully our 2020 FAMILY CAMP went ahead. The theme this year was "Lessons of First Importance" based upon 1Cor.15:1-4. We utilized NZ talent for our speakers and I believe we were well-fed scripturally by each one. All in all the weekend was an amazing success: The campsite was great, the weather was great, the Bible messages were great, the singing was great, the fun & games were great, the food was great, the company of good brethren, friends, and family was outstanding! (We even had a family from New Caledonia come - sure am glad to have met the Zamord's).



Inside games



Kitchen slaves volunteers



Kids at the river



Outside games, tents in background



Lesson



Sporting fixtures



Family fun



The Zamord's



Sunday worship gathering

YOUTH

Our youth group gatherings have been rather limited in recent times and the lockdown hasn't helped either. We did get in a special dual birthday celebration at the church building in Feb. for Noah & Jahanna; and this Apr. Rachael organized a Zoom meeting for a game of *Name that Item in the Close-Up Image*.



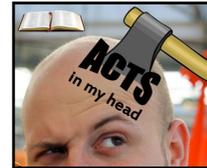
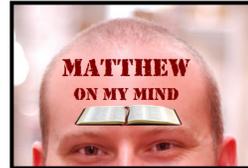
GENERAL

We have seen the congregation shrink in number as 2019 came to a close. The Jensen family moved north, Charise Nocon and her daughter Francine moved south, Ron & Judy Green moved back to the States, as did Caitlyn Morrison. These 10 brethren will all be missed. Sadly, another member became unfaithful meaning 2 more departed. The losses are slightly balanced with the addition of Daniel Jensen & Joziah Townsend. Both are graduates of the Bear Valley Bible Inst., NZ, and bring good value to us.

TEACHING / WORSHIP

Prior to the lockdown we just began a study of First Corinthians in the Sun. a.m. adult class. While we were away for our US report trip there was a hiatus on the Tues. evening class on the book of Revelation, but upon our return we started again and are up to chapter 9.

During the lockdown, I have again paused the Revelation study and have been doing a remote class using Facebook live video. The plan has been to increase our basic familiarity with a couple of NT books. The 1st I called *Matthew on My Mind*, the 2nd I've called *Acts in My Head*. I simply read through a block of the book, give some Bible marking tips for each chapter, and then give a list of one prominent feature per chapter for the brethren to memorise. It's nothing too technical, but hopefully it's helpful.



FAMILY NEWS

Chloe has been working fulltime for a local hairdressing salon for just over a year now. Since she is doing an apprenticeship she still has to do school assignments and exams, so understandably it's a busy time for her. Because Chloe is still training, a positive by-product for me is getting free haircuts at her work.

* **Chloe**: "I just want blessings."

Rach: "You have lots of blessings."

Chloe: "I want my blessings to be Nike Air-force shoes."

Ethan is currently part of a building crew constructing huge commercial chicken sheds. He is hoping to eventually get into residential housing jobs but loves the hard work & experience this is giving him at the moment, and it does count towards fulfilling his apprenticeship. The picture to the right might not though...



Michael "Chicken salt is made from chicken dandruff."

* **Rach**: "You shouldn't boast about your own abilities."

Let your praise come from others."

Mike: "O.k., well praise me then."

Phoebe is basking in the fact that she's grown taller than Chloe.

Rachael has found it quite surreal to now only have two children schooling at home, but is slowly getting adjusted to the new period of our life.

* **Rach** signed us up to a 30 day eating plan called the Arbonne diet. It's not a starvation program but a cleansing one. I didn't enjoy every aspect of it, yet I can't deny the results. We both felt so much better internally and lost significant weight [the photo testifies to the positive changes].



Kent: Along with doing the above diet, I was also trying to get fit so I can give soccer another go this season. I was running, walking, training, & even swimming. However, lockdown has proven challenging in this area so I've somewhat gone backwards. I'm looking forward to getting back into a normal situation again.

Until next time, all the best in Christ,

Kent, Rachael, Chloe, Ethan, Michael & Phoebe O'D.

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