



St. Peter's Caversham  
**The Pebble**

DECEMBER 20, 2015

ADVENT 4

**WHEN THEOLOGY AND GYNAECOLOGY MEET**

What happened in Mary's womb is indeed outside our normal gynaecological expectations. Is it impossible for God to do what Luke tells us he has done? No, because God made the world anyway, so he is capable of doing anything he wants to it, and within it. That is not saying that the world and human beings came straight from the hand of God – the long process of evolution did that – but it was a process that God launched and directed.

The problem with the kind of miraculous intervention that conceives Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary is that God is obliged to respect the scientific laws that he made to govern the natural operations of the world. They are wise laws, and he wouldn't want to be meddling with them, and be changing them all the time, or the result would be chaos in our world. Yet on the other hand the Bible makes it clear that God does occasionally suspend these laws, or as Rowan Williams puts it, he allows nature to open up to its own depths in such a way as to permit extraordinary events to occur which move his purposes forward in the world.

The point of the virgin birth is that it is God's way of making it clear that Jesus came from outside the cycle of human generation. The x factor in this remarkable human being is partly because there is more to him than just human DNA can account for. He came from another place in every sense of the word. There is another level of vital human existence here, an extra dimension of being in this child, and its source cannot have just been his mum and dad.

*Fr Hugh Bowron*

**A Warm Welcome**

to all who are sharing with us in worship today.  
The Ministry of Healing and Wholeness is offered in the Lady Chapel during Communion. Everyone is warmly invited to Morning Tea in the Parish Lounge after the Solemn Eucharist.

**The Liturgy for Today**

8.00 am Holy Eucharist (1662)

10:30 am Nine Lessons and Carols

**HYMNS:**

See Nine Lessons and Carols Service sheet

**READINGS FOR TODAY (at 8 am)**

[Micah 5: 1-4](#)

[Luke 1: 39-44](#)

**READINGS FOR NEXT SUNDAY**

[Ecclesiasticus 3: 2-6](#)

[Colossians 3: 12-21](#)

[Psalm 127](#)

[Luke 2: 41-52](#)

**Parish News**

**Nine Lessons and Carols** This morning we have our Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at 10.30 am. The Service will conclude with a brief Eucharistic prayer and communion.

**Christmas appeal** St Peter's commends and supports Christian World Service's "Help Rebuild Lives" Christmas Appeal. Your contribution through the appeal envelope helps people in the third world with little or nothing to have a better life.

**Raffle** The raffle was drawn last Sunday. First prize, the quilt, Mary Barton. Second prize, the tea set, Jono Gillies, Third prize, the mirror, Wendy Stocks. The raffle raised \$240 for parish funds.

**The developing Flag saga** Parishioners may recall that two of our Anglican Communion flags were stolen from the flag pole in reasonably rapid succession. One was returned and run up the flag pole two weeks ago, with the Vicar sighting an apprehensive and sheepish looking teenager exiting the tower vicinity about an hour

beforehand. Recently an attempt was made to return the second flag in a similar manner but something went wrong and the halyard became entangled on the tower power points, with the result that the flag slumped on the flagpole cradle. Swift action by a couple of 8 o'clock attendees got the flag down to safety.

**Christmas tableau** Grateful thanks to Tubby and Averil Hopkins, and to Ken Ferguson for creating our beautiful Christmas tableau. Thought is going in to the possibility of creating an Easter garden located in the interior of the altar in a similar manner.

**Display a poster** Are you able to display an attractive A3 poster in a public place advertising our Christmas and New Year's Eve Services? Please contact the Vicar if you can help in this way.

**Readers for Watchnight Service** St Peters will see in the New Year with a Watchnight Service beginning at 10.30 pm. This consists of a Vigil of apposite and appropriate readings, followed by a celebration of the Eucharist using a westernised version of the Liturgy of St Basil. If you would like to read a lesson at this Service please indicate your availability on the notice in the Link. A social gathering follows in the lounge to see in the New Year.

**Keeping on keeping on** The normal pattern of Thursday Services, and of Evensong and Benediction on the first Sunday of the month will continue throughout January.

**Church news** The Editor commends our national on line news magazine Anglican Taonga (google Anglican Taonga) as a useful source of current news stories from the wider Church both throughout New Zealand and the world.

**New hall booking number** Please phone 453 4621, David Hoskins' new phone number, to make a hall booking.

**Thursday Eucharist** is celebrated at 10 am in the Lady Chapel at the west end of the Church.

**Pray for the Sick and Infirm** Claire Johnson, Cherry Gordon, Jun Miyagi, Margaret Sterling, Anita Stephens, Mahlia and Sheree Napier, Olive Burt, Joyce McQuarrie, Katie Bowron and Denise Walker.

**Pray for those whose Memorials occur at this time** John Jerome, William Tubman, John Dougherty, Marjorie Garth, Stanley Gurney (Priest), Roger Swain, David Norman and Nora Carson.

**The Church under Putin** Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow has aligned himself closely with the Russian government and in particular with the nationalist strategies of Vladimir Putin. This is not surprising given Russian Orthodoxy's long tradition of supporting the Tsarist state, and of arguing that Russia is the third Rome, the true centre of Christian civilization in contrast to a decadent west that has lost its Christian moorings. However Russia's recent attempt to annex the eastern Ukraine has placed Kirill in a dilemma for while he has promoted the spread of Orthodox civilization the violence and intimidation deployed by pro-Russian separatists and their Russian army supporters contradicts the church's historic mission as mediator and peacemaker. Thus he has emphasised the need for peace, negotiations and an end to civil strife. While trapped to some extent in this Faustian pact with the state the Russian Orthodox church has quietly worked for internal reform in another direction, that of theological education. The two dioceses of Ivanovo and of Vladimir to the north of Moscow are a show case in point where their Bishops have allowed a considerable deal of independence to their priests, and with it a relatively free space for spiritual and intellectual independence. Theological institutes have formed, which together with an increased number of seminaries have increased opportunities for serious theological study amongst laity and clergy. The number of monasteries has increased dramatically, as have educational programmes and social outreach. This is a different form of Orthodox conservatism which emphasises social outreach and compassion for the marginalised. Thus this quiet revolution addresses one of the Achilles heels of Orthodoxy - the theological illiteracy amongst lower echelon clergy and the laity in general which has tended to encourage superstition, credulity and wayward forms of Christian piety. Orthodox theologians are amongst the world's best. Now the challenge is to percolate their intellectual treasure throughout the wider body of the church.

**Parish Priest:** Fr Hugh Bowron - 455- 3961

**Vicar's Warden:** Tubby Hopkins - 454-2399

**People's Warden:** Kate Paterson - 455-5384

**Stewardship Recorder:** Averil Hopkins - 454-2399

**[www.stpeterscaversham.org.nz](http://www.stpeterscaversham.org.nz)**