



# KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

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## Sunday 15 March 2026 – Lent 4

Our Service today is led by Eleanor Ashby,  
one of our Lay Preachers.

### **Welcome to our service this morning.**

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

***Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.***

**Love:** we are committed to selfless love to all, including those marginalised by society and the wider church.

### WELCOME

### CALL TO WORSHIP:

Let us praise God who meets our needs and leads us to places  
of tranquillity and rest.

**Let us praise God who comforts us and replaces our fears  
with overflowing love.**

### HYMN TIS 684: [Love Will Be Our Lenten Calling](#)

*(Elizabeth Smith; Tune: Regent Square)*

1. Love will be our Lenten calling,  
love to shake and shatter sin,  
waking every closed, cold spirit,  
stirring new life deep within,  
till the quickened heart  
remembers  
what our Easter birth can mean.

2. Peace will be our Lenten living  
as we turn for home again,  
longing for the words of pardon,  
stripping off old grief and pain,  
till we stand, restored and joyful,  
with the Church on Easter day.

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**Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.**

3. Truth will be our Lenten learning:  
hear the Crucified One call!  
Shadowed by the Saviour's passion,  
images and idols fall,  
and, in Easter's holy splendour,  
God alone is all in all.

### **PRAYER OF ADORATION AND PRAISE:**

Shepherd God, we praise you for enfolding us in your great love. We rejoice in the knowledge that your care for us is so great that we lack nothing. You provide for all our needs, even the strength to cope in times of darkness and distress. The depth of your care for us is revealed in the person of Jesus, who was prepared to go to the cross to prove that your goodness and mercy is more powerful than evil and death. In response to these many blessings, we have gathered together in this, your house, praying that this time of worship will be a fitting response to the many blessings we receive from you. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **CANDLE LITURGY:**

#### **Meditation:**

It's Sunday morning. Last week, with all its demands, is over. The coming week, with yet another round of challenges and demands, is not quite here. I invite you to close your eyes and be in the moment. No matter where you are in your thoughts and feelings—relieved about what you have accomplished, anxious about what's left undone, concerned about people or projects—no matter where you are in your journey this day—I encourage you to set all that aside and consider where you are right now. Whatever is true for you right now, in this moment, whether it be joy or sadness, gratitude or anxiety, let it come forward. When it is fully present, then listen . . . for God is present in these moments, too. God meets you where you are and calls you forward, moment by moment, guiding you slowly but surely toward transformation.

(Silent time)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain caused by the lack of basic needs—lack of food, of shelter, of education, of healthcare, of love.

(A candle is extinguished.)

*Let us pray:*

**Loving God, we thank you that you are with us, and that we may call upon you no matter where we are, or what we are feeling. Keep us mindful of your presence and trusting in your promise—that you are working with us in the moment-by-moment unfolding of our lives. Amen.**

## HYMN HFTC 591: [The Lord's My Shepherd](#)

### PRAYER OF CENTERING AND RENEWAL:

Heavenly Father,  
We come before You with hearts that are weary, longing for Your power, Your presence, and Your peace.  
So many are waiting —  
Waiting for breakthrough,  
Waiting for healing,  
Waiting for You to move again.  
Wake up our hearts where faith has grown cold, and stir up a fire that cannot be quenched.  
Let Your Spirit move mightily —in our homes, our churches, our communities, and our nations.  
We ask for restoration.  
Restore what has been lost —broken relationships, stolen joy, crushed dreams, fading hope.  
You are the God who makes all things new.  
Renew our minds, our strength, our passion to follow You.  
When we are tired, fill us with Your power. When we are discouraged, remind us of Your promises.  
Let us not grow weary in doing good.  
We surrender ourselves again to You.  
Let Your will be done, and let Your glory be revealed. Amen

### READINGS:

**GOSPEL:** John 9:1-41                      *(page 1664)*

**EPISTLE:** Ephesians 5: 8-14              *(page 1819)*

### REFLECTION: Jesus and the Man Born Blind

I came across a “fascinating list” that carried this intriguing title: “Great Truths About Life That Little Children Have Learned.” Let me share a few of these “great truths” with you.

- (1) “ No matter how hard you try you cannot baptize a cat.”
- (2) “When your mom is mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair.”
- (3) “Never ask your 3-year-old brother to hold a tomato... or an egg.”
- (4) “You can't trust dogs to watch your food for you.”
- (5) “Don't sneeze when somebody is cutting your hair.”
- (6) “School lunches stick to the wall.”
- (7) “You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.”
- (8) “Never wear polka-dot underwear under white shorts... no matter how cute the underwear is.”

Now, it is virtually certain that the children learned these “great truths” and came to these bold new insights after some dramatic eye-opening experience in their own personal lives. Can’t you just see in your mind’s eye,... some children trying to baptize a cat... and learning full well from that experience that this is just not a good thing to do. The point is clear: A dramatic personal eye-opening experience can give us new insight, new perception, new vision.

On a much deeper level and on a much more positive level, that’s precisely what we discover in this amazing story in John 9. A man blind from birth has a dramatic eye-opening experience with Jesus... and talk about new vision, talk about new insight... he is completely and totally healed. He is made whole and he comes back from the pool of Siloam with 20/20 vision,... able to see perfectly for the first time in his life. His transformation is so complete and so dramatic that he even looks a little different. The townspeople see him and say: “Hey, isn’t that the blind beggar? He can see now. Is that him? No, it’s just someone who looks like him. Couldn’t be him,” And the formerly blind man says: “It’s me alright. I am the man.”

Remember the story with me...

One day as Jesus and His disciples are walking along together, they see a pitiful sight... a man who has been blind from birth. The disciples watch him groveling and begging there in the gutter. This sightless one with dead eyes makes a sad, haunting picture... as he crouches there and feels in the dirt for scraps of garbage... and wards off with his hands and arms the trampling, heedless crowds, eating their dust and pleading (without much success) for their help. Intrigued by this man’s horrible plight, the disciples ask Jesus a hard theological question: Who sinned? Was it this man or his parents? Why was he born blind? Was it his fault? Or did someone in his family do something wrong to cause this?

There is an interesting theological point here. The religious leaders of Jesus’ time had the mistaken notion that the persons who were down on their luck were in that fix because they had sinned... and this was God’s judgment upon them for their wrongdoings. So these blind people, or lame people, or leprous people, or poor people were looked down upon by society as sinners, as wicked people and they were shunned. But Jesus didn’t see them as sinners or as wicked people. He saw them as children of God, as persons of integrity and worth, as members of God’s family, as His brothers and sisters... and He loved them and embraced them and enjoyed them... and healed them.

So, here in John 9 Jesus goes over to the blind man to help him. Notice that when the disciples see the blind man, they see something to discuss, but when Jesus sees him, He sees something to do.

The disciples want to debate the truth; Jesus chooses to do it... and be it. The disciples want to give their energy to words. Jesus puts His energy into action. The point is this: It's not enough to talk about it. What pleases God is when we do something about it. Jesus is trying to teach us that here. So, notice this... He spits on the ground and makes clay of the spittle and then He anoints the man's eyes with the clay. Now, if that seems repulsive to you, don't let it be. Saliva has long been a folk remedy. Ancient people believed strongly in its curative powers... and in a sense, we still do. At least, our children do. A child burns his finger and into his mouth it goes... or a child scrapes her arm and wants mom to kiss it and make it well.

Recall the rest of the story. After anointing the man's eyes with the clay, Jesus sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man goes, washes away the clay, and comes back seeing! The neighbours are amazed. They can't believe it. They ask him how this happened and he says the man called Jesus healed me. He gave me my sight. And there is great joy in the city, and they all live happily ever after?... No, not quite! The Pharisees, the watchdogs of religion, get wind of this... and they come out fuming ... upset about the whole thing... because for one thing they are suspicious of everything Jesus does... and on top of that, it happened on the Sabbath Day... a blatant violation of their rigid rules. "He made clay" ... "He healed"... on the Sabbath... and that is strictly forbidden. We can't have that! So, they come out with the fervour of Barney Fife to investigate. They interrogate the healed man's parents... and scare them out of their wits... and then they interrogate the man who has been healed... and he gives them a classic and powerful response that has resounded across the centuries. He says: "This one thing I know. Once I was blind, but now I see." You see, this man (like most people) is a Pragmatist. Look at what he is saying to their "hard-line" questioning! "I don't know about all of that. I don't know about rules or regulations or restrictions... but I do know results when I see them. This one thing I do know. Once I was blind, but now I see." The Pharisees are defeated by this argument and they know it,... so they do what people often do when they feel insecure or have no moral power... they turn to force. They kick him out. They cast him out of the synagogue. They excommunicate him. They push him out.

Now, this sets the stage for one of the most beautiful moments in all of scripture. Jesus hears about it. He hears that they have cast him out and Jesus comes to find him. Aware of his trouble, Jesus comes to him. Jesus comes to help. That's the good news, isn't it... it's when we are in trouble Jesus comes to help! And when they come face to face Jesus says to him: "Do you believe in me, the Son of God?" And the healed man says: "Yes, Lord, I believe" ... and he worships Him!

But this is not just a story of a man who was cured of physical blindness. It is above all a story of a man who was enlightened by Christ and came to faith in him. The amazing thing about the story is this: the blind man saw more than the religious leaders, in the sense that he saw the goodness in Jesus and had more faith than they had.

The Pharisees may have had perfect eyesight, yet Jesus called them blind. To see well, good eyesight alone is not sufficient. I think we would all agree that there are many forms of blindness besides physical.

Selfishness can blind us to the needs of others.

Insensitivity can blind us to the hurt we cause others.

Pride can blind us to our own faults.

Prejudice can blind us to the truth.

Thinking ourselves better than others can blind us to their equal dignity and worth;

Materialism can blind us to spiritual values.

All these things and more can do to the windows of the eyes what curtains do to an ordinary window - they prevent the person inside from seeing outside. We can have good eyesight and yet fail to see so much that is good, true, and beautiful.

Unfortunately, we all have many blind spots. Helen Keller - blind and deaf from the age of 19 months, once said: "One day I asked a friend of mine who had just returned from a long walk in the woods what she had seen, she replied: 'Nothing in particular.' 'How was this possible,' I asked myself when I, who cannot hear or see, find hundreds of things to interest me through mere touch. I feel the delicate shape and design of a leaf. I pass my hands lovingly over the rough bark of a pine tree. Occasionally if I'm lucky, I place my hand quietly on a small tree and feel the happy quiver of a bird in full song. All this has convinced me of one thing: the greatest calamity that can befall people, is not that they be born blind, but rather that they should have eyes and yet fail to see.'

If we can be so blind regarding the things of the external world, how blind then can we be when it comes to the world of the spiritual?

The most important eyes are the eyes of faith. Faith changes around the saying 'seeing is believing' into 'believing is seeing.'

Jesus said that he came to open the eyes of the blind. He wasn't talking about the physically blind only, but all those who had lost their way in life and could no longer find their way to God.

Believing is seeing - he opened the eyes of Zacchaeus to the danger of riches; he opened the eyes of Mary Magdalene to the wretchedness of her life; he opened the eyes of the dying thief to the light and hope of God's mercy. All of these 'saw' God in Jesus - while the Pharisees stumbled along in the dark.

So often we are blind to God's presence in the world. Then along comes Jesus to open our eyes, 'I am the light of the world,' he says. And if we condensed into words, the whole message of John's Gospel, and put these words into Jesus' mouth – perhaps we would hear him say: 'You want to see God? Anyone who sees me, sees God.'

Believing is seeing.

In William Bausch's book *STORYTELLING, Imagination and Faith*<sup>1</sup> there is a great story about a businessman running to catch a train when he bumped into a table containing a basket of apples, overturning it. He kept running to catch the train but felt so bad about the overturned apples that he turned back. He was so glad that he did when he discovered that the boy selling the apples was blind. The man picked up some of the apples which had been bruised in the fall and, apologizing for the accident, gave the boy ten dollars. As he began to walk away – the boy called out to him "Are you Jesus?" The man stopped, and he wondered.<sup>2</sup>

When we 'see' from a faith stance, we 'see' beyond the colour of a person's skin, or their gender or status - to the person 'within'.

We see beyond the Jesus of the gospels to the Jesus who desires to be a part of our lives, saving, renewing, transforming us in ways we never dreamt were possible - and without Christ - they're not possible.

At the conclusion of our gospel reading, Jesus remarks that he came to bring sight to those who do not see, and to question the vision of those who think that they do see.

Which of these categories do we fit into? Hopefully into that to which Paul also calls us: "Live as children of the light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth."

Amen

**HYMN HFTC 28: [Amazing Grace](#)**

## OFFERING and OFFERTORY PRAYER:

God of grace and truth; in Jesus, Light of the world, you have fulfilled your promise to be with us when we walk through the darkest valley. Our gratitude for this evidence of your love for the world is made visible in these our offerings. Bless them and us, we pray, as we seek to do what is pleasing to you through our worship, witness and service made in Jesus' name. Amen

## COMMUNITY TIME:

## PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

## HYMN AA 8: [Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You](#)

1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.
2. We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and travellers on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.
3. I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.
4. I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.
5. When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.
6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

## BENEDICTION:

May the goodness and mercy of God enfold you,  
the glory and light of Jesus Christ shine upon you,  
the insight and power of the Holy Spirit inform you  
this day and every day.

**AMEN** (3-fold sung)

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## Summary of Building Better Communities: Housing

The fourth week of the Building Better Communities series, held on 10 March, focused on the critical issue of housing within our local community. We would like to extend a warm thank you to Ange Tepania, Kaiārahi/Manager for the Tai Tokerau Emergency Housing Charitable Trust, for sharing her deep expertise and long-standing experience in supporting vulnerable whānau. The evening was grounded in recent State of the Nation report data, aiming to move beyond political noise to amplify the voices of those seeking a fairer, more equitable society. Ange's presentation reminded us that "People are the most important thing in this world" and that true community means ensuring nobody gets left behind.

During her presentation, Ange highlighted that while motel stays for emergency housing have decreased due to tighter criteria, the underlying housing pressure has simply shifted rather than dropped. She noted a concerning rise in hidden homelessness – including couch surfing and living in cars or garages – and shared that 180 people were living on Whangārei streets alone as of October 2025. Despite some stabilisation in the national housing supply, affordability remains the biggest barrier, with over 540 people on social housing waiting lists in Whangārei and 1,200 across Te Tai Tokerau.

To move from crisis to confidence, she emphasised the need for whānau-centred services and increased investment in Kaupapa Māori community-led initiatives. In the small group discussions that followed, participants identified systemic issues such as the failure of the free market to provide affordable options and the trend of politicising what is fundamentally a moral issue. Attendees expressed frustration over rental costs that outpace wage increases and the impact of cancelled social housing projects. The conversation shifted toward a shared vision where housing is treated as a basic human right rather than an investment commodity. Dreams for the future included diverse living models, such as intergenerational housing that pairs students with senior citizens, and ensuring disabled people have access to homes near essential transport and services.

The session concluded with a range of practical actions, from community-led trade training on relocatable houses in high schools to requiring landlords to rent out empty homes or face fines. Suggestions were made to encourage wealthy individuals to invest in low-cost housing and to adopt universal design approaches to make construction more cost-effective. There was also a call for stronger advocacy, including joining movements against "move on" orders and promoting resources like the Tai Tokerau Housing Hub. Ultimately, the group agreed that coordinated community action and support for kaimahi are essential to building a thriving community where everyone has a place to call their own.