This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God (1 John 3.1)

50 years ago this church would have been too small for all the Methodists of Invercargill to meet on Sundays. So why are churches not full today? Society has become more secular, less aware of church.

[1] What does ‘know’ mean for John?

In John’s writings it means ‘understanding’

See John 1.26, 1.47f, 3.10, 4.10, 4.22, substituting ‘understand’ for ‘know’.

This is not head knowledge, but heart knowledge; knowing God is similar to knowing that one’s partner loves you.

[2] We know God

We know in our hearts that there was a resurrection, that Jesus is God, that the Trinity is real, but in our heads there is uncertainty, some confusion.

It is not easy living with uncertainty, but in reality this is what faith actually is.

This does not mean there is no basis for faith, but that its basis lies in the heart not the head.

“I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when I don’t feel it. I believe in God even when he’s silent (on a cellar wall where Jews had hidden during WW2)

[3] Does the World know us?

For John ‘World’ does not mean the physical earth, but human life lived away from God.

Much of society today is like this, many just do not ‘get’ us. “Why worship an unknowable god? Why spend so much time, money, energy on church stuff?”

Any explanation gets polite but blank looks.

This is not our fault (or at most only a very small part). Note that just as church involvement decreased so has involvement in politics, sports clubs, and service organisations.

However this does not mean we have no responsibility to evangelise, just that out efforts will probably fall on deaf ears.

So why should we still do our outreach in the face of this? Because we still believe!