

What a year!!

We ended 2020 with all overseas travel cancelled, home lockdown for a couple of months, interest rates at historic lows, house prices at historic highs, a single party Government (rare in MMP) and most of the western world still in the grips of an economically crippling pandemic.

But we appear to have come out of it ok. We are a resilient lot. Many tourism businesses have rejigged themselves for the domestic market and others have made appropriate changes to reflect the “new world” as it is being called.

So, what does it mean for you financially? It means a time to pause and reflect. It means looking closely at your financial situation, notably debt levels, investments, and protecting against future issues. More on these in accompanying articles.

We hope you had a well-deserved break over summer and are facing 2021 with a refreshed outlook.



We have moved!

We have moved, but not far. We are now at 18 Fitzgerald Avenue, which offers better parking for clients and more space to work in, but the same phone numbers, same great coffee and same people. We look forward to welcoming you into our new home.



Corey's year that didn't quite go to plan!

After many years of planning and months of preparing, the moment came to set off on our year long sabbatical in Scotland where my wife Lizzie is from. Along with our 8 year old twin daughters, Eva and Grace, we boarded our plane on 22nd December 2019, full of excitement for our year of travels and adventures. We had planned a year connecting with our Scottish family and friends and exploring Europe and travelling to bike races including the Tour De France.

But after only 2 months COVID hit the UK and our life changed dramatically. We entered full lock down and schools closed. All the time we planned to spend with family was halted which saddened us greatly. Both Lizzie and I contracted Coronavirus, which was not pleasant, but we made a full recovery in time. As with any situation, there are always silver linings and we made the most of these. We enjoyed more family time and a slower pace of life. We enjoyed home schooling (most of the time) and the chance to be more involved with the girls' learning journey and development. Watching what other families were going through we felt grateful for our health, and the health of



our loved ones, our livelihoods and were reminded about what is really important in life. We no longer take hugs, human touch, and socialising with friends for granted.

Our travel plans obviously changed and we saw none of Europe but instead had a fantastic 3 week camping trip on the beautiful West Coast and Islands of Scotland.

Due to the year's travel restrictions, my visa ran out earlier than planned and so I had to leave Scotland before the end of the year. After some sorting out, and having to leave the family behind, I managed to book a flight back to New Zealand in early December 2020. Luckily, I had applied to MIQ early and managed to get a precious spot before Christmas. Two weeks of quarantine in a Christchurch hotel was not an unpleasant experience, with friendly staff, good food, and time to contemplate my time away and what life in a land free of COVID was to feel like. I was released on December 23 just in time for a Christmas with my NZ family.

Lizzie, Eva and Grace arrived safely back in NZ in mid January and are grateful to be back and no longer living in a full lockdown. 2020 had many highs and many lows but will be one we will never forget!

Your savings could earn as much as ONE percent!

If you have money in the bank, interest rates on offer vary from half a percent to just over one percent. With inflation still expected to go up, your money will clearly lose value. But is there an alternative? Yes, there is.

Our investment adviser can take you through portfolio options that offer returns well beyond the 1%, customised to fit your level of risk-taking. While bank interest is ridiculously low, other options including shares, are performing very well. These can be mixed with other options to give a stable return.

Call us to discuss such opportunities and how you can do better than 1%.



We are 45 Years old!



It is nice to know that some things are still stable and certain in current times. SwainWoodham has a proud history going back 45 years. During this time, we have looked after original clients, the children of these clients and now their grandchildren!

Some of our people have changed, with the retirement of founders Ken Swain and Morrie Woodham, but their legacy of being client focused and offering fully customised solutions lives on. Few financial services practices can match this longevity and we intend to add another 45 years to this record.

Managing your finances in times of uncertainty

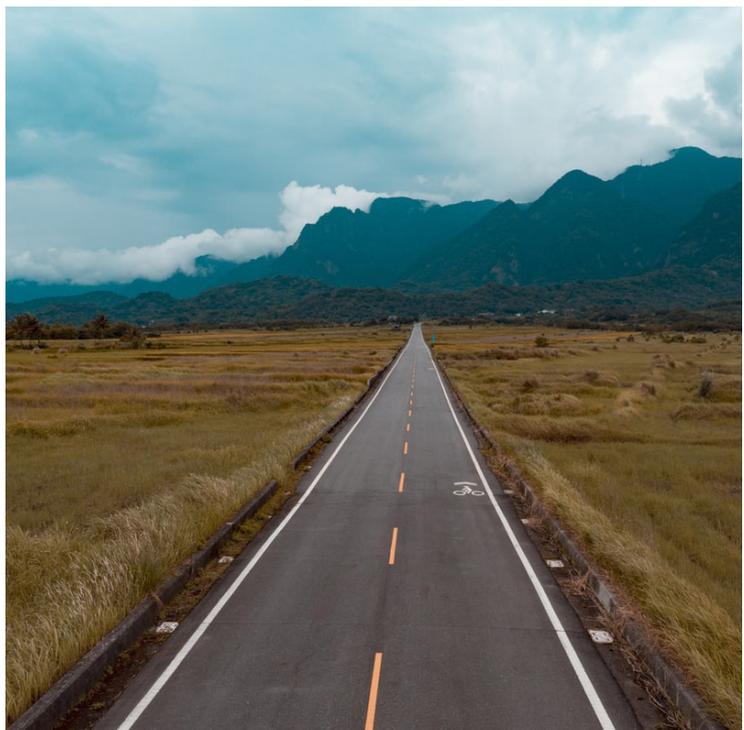
It is easy to be complacent, as NZ is more or less COVID-free and job losses are less than expected. But just as 2020 started with a shock, we have no idea what 2021 will bring. Here are a few tips to help ensure that any unforeseen issue doesn't cause financial ruin.

Go Back to the Basics: Download the last six months bank statements into an Excel spreadsheet. Six months overcomes any individual month with out-of-ordinary expenses. Group the expenses into obvious categories. Now go through each one and look for savings. Can you change power or internet suppliers, can you trim your food bill by 10%, can you cut out the daily \$5 coffees and so on? You may be surprised how many savings are possible.

Top up your Emergency Fund: If you don't have one, set one up in a separate bank account. Add a modest amount into it each payday. This is for unexpected car or appliance repairs, vet or dental bills, and any other large expenses that your daily living account can't cope with.

Reevaluate Your Debts: Money is incredibly cheap and easy to get right now but avoid the trap of pushing up your debt. Pause and look at ways to reduce debt, particularly any credit card balances.

Your backstop – Insurances: Most kiwis are underinsured, both for their possessions and lives. It's a good time to have a long hard look at them and determine which ones should be increased and which ones you no longer need. We can help with that.



The virtual world is with us

The terms: Zoom, Teams, Skype for Business, Hangouts, Cisco WebEx, GoToMeeting and others like it have entered our vocabulary over the past few months as the lockdown forced many to adopt such technology. We live in a technology-enabled world and this was very much to our advantage during the pandemic. But use of such communication methods hasn't ceased. Social media traffic exploded during lockdown and this hasn't gone back to original numbers. Many companies now have staff at home, Zooming in for meetings. Recently, more than one medical practice has started offering virtual consultations by phone. In a similar way, we can offer online virtual consultations should you wish. We can send the appropriate link to talk to you and your family members about managing your financial lives. Ask us about them.



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