

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church Newsletter July / August 2015

*Our mission in this parish is to share
the love of God with all people*

Our people and their stories: Val Ranson

as recorded by Dorothy Preece

Val Ranson came to stay with her sister, Rev Mary Petersen, in September 2014 when Mary became ill. In that short time, although still working through her own griefs and trials, Val has become a loved and very valuable member of the St. Andrew's team. It is a privilege to tell Val's story:



"Mary was 11 and I was nearly 9 when our parents brought us out to New Zealand from Kemsing, in Kent, a very beautiful village in the 'garden of England'. Our lives revolved around activities at the Seal Baptist Mission, which our father, Sidney seemed to run single-handedly. He was not a minister, but a very dedicated lay worker. Mother, Jasmine, played the organ at the Sevenoaks Baptist Church. Listening to her gave me goosebumps! We shared a house full of God's love, music, animals and happiness. We had a dog, a cat, a budgie that Mary won at the school fete, a rabbit and a tortoise. I got my love of animals from Mum. Our old dog Laddie even came with us to NZ - I couldn't bear to leave him behind."

The Jenkins family arrived in NZ on 28 May 1960, and settled in Manurewa, where Dad had a position as a research chemist with Marley Co. Mum was a teacher at Manurewa Central School. Attending school, 9-yr-old 'Sheila' quickly changed to Valerie (her second name) after being teased unmercifully. She has been 'Val' ever since.

"Once again, Dad ran the Manurewa Baptist Church almost single-handedly, or so it seemed to me. Mum and Dad played piano and organ together, and once again there were the goosebumps. Mum also played the pipe organ at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle for many years.

"Sunday was always a busy, but very reverent day – which didn't go down too well with me in my teenage years. (I guess I was a bit of a rebel.) The faith in this family was very strong. My earliest childhood memory is of Mum and Dad, always embracing and saying a short prayer before they parted. (Dad rode a

motorbike in those days, so maybe the prayers were necessary!).

"My love of making crafty things for the local markets came from Mum too. She was an exceptional artist as well as a musician. She sold paintings, sketches and pottery, giving every cent to the SPCA. Mum and I did markets together, in and around Auckland, including some with Bob Kerridge from the SPCA. We marched with him to the Parnell Cathedral to bless all the animals. That was a huge highlight for me.

"At seventeen I became very ill and spent 3 months in Middlemore Hospital. Two church women visited me, and as they prayed over me they let me know that they felt I was being punished because I was bad.

"I had a run-in with God then!

"With their faith Mum and Dad, my darling sister Mary, and the hospital chaplain got me through from near death.

"At 19 I married my childhood sweetheart. We were told I would never have children, so I gave God another chance – prayed so hard I thought I would burst - and we had three beautiful children. We now have 7 grand children and 5 great-grandies. God WAS listening! Sadly, my husband and I divorced, but we are still best friends.

"At different times I worked as a hairdresser, waitress, cook, cleaner, shopkeeper and Weight Watchers leader.

"Our family's introduction to the Coromandel came in 1969. Dad and Mum built the very first house on the ocean side of Paku Hill, Tairua and we spent lots of holidays there.

"My life took a dramatic turn in the faith department, when our darling Dad died in his early 60's. I could not believe this wonderfully clever, funny man could be taken from us. It was too cruel. Mary and I have always been close and once again my darling sister, though heavy with her own grief, got me through.

"After Dad died we moved to Whangamata where I again waitressed at night, cleaned houses during the day and continued running Weight Watchers around the Peninsula. In 1997 we bought the Onemana Dairy, which we ran for 6 years, commuting from Whangamata. In 1995 Mum came to live with us after suffering a brain haemorrhage.

"Mum died in 2003, and I felt that God had finally abandoned me. This happened just as Mary was considering ministry with this parish – a hugely difficult time for her, but once again Mary was the strong one. Her faith pulled me, kicking and screaming, through the trauma. I began to think, maybe there was something in this God stuff after all.

After we sold the dairy I fulfilled a life-long passion, to cook for the residents and staff at Moana House, and supply Meals on Wheels. I loved that job. I think

'caring' is in our genes, passed on from our wonderful parents.

"In 2006 my friend became terminally ill. It was her ambition to go to see the Pacific Islands, so I borrowed some money and together we went on a Pacific cruise. On board ship, God intervened in my life again. I met Glenn, who was also terminally ill, with only a short time to live. I went to Totara North, in the far north to take care of him. There we lived in a 7x3 metre cabin. Four years ago, Glenn was given only three days to live. My sister Mary and many others added his name to prayer circles around the country, and we had three more years together. Once again, I believe God was listening. Glenn died a year ago, and I came back to Whangamata to get a job.

"Then Mary became ill. She simply had to back off her workload, and stay in bed. That was when I came to the Manse to look after her. I did what I could to fill the gaps in Mary's pastoral caring role. I helped with Community Meals and tried to ease the load in practical ways. Then I broke my leg, and the tables were turned!

I finally attended church to hear Mary preach. Her words touched me deeply – and I now know that God loves even me!

"One Sunday when Mary was away, Janice Purdie preached about 'being called'. She talked about church outreach and about community meals – and I knew she was talking to me – little old me!

"Everyone has been so good to me since I've been here. I realise I am meant to be here, healing physically, and yes, spiritually too. I hope I can do a good job for God and the community, helping Mary where I can.

"I was asked recently, if I had thought of going into the ministry. My answer is, 'I think I already am.'"

- YES, indeed Val, your special and much needed ministry is valued by us all, by Mary, and especially by God! Thank you for all that you do, and for telling us your story. – DP.

#####

COMMUNITY MEALS - still happening every Monday at 5pm with a large team of volunteers helping in all sorts of ways. The many very vulnerable people who come for a meal or have one delivered are very grateful for this practical support. Thanks very much to all those who help with donations of money or food or their time in this vital ministry in our community. --community meals coordinated by Val Ranson



Our Church website is MOBILE-COMPLIANT and even lets you SEARCH the week's events from your phone - check it out on your smartphone today! www.standrewsbythesea.org.nz

Also: if you would prefer to receive this newsletter via email as an attachment, contact Charlotte at strettoc@gmail.com



**St Andrew's by the Sea
Community Church, Whitianga**

**HISTORY BOOK
FUNDRAISER**

WE NEED YOUR PHOTOS!



Do you have photos of events at the community Church in its earlier days?

- * **Were your GRANDPARENTS Baptised here?**
- * **PARENTS Married here?**
- * **Did YOU attend Sunday School?**
- * **Picnics, or other events?**



**If you have photos of church events that we might use
please ring Julie - 984 9140 or Robin - 869 5054**

Parish Register

Funerals

Our thoughts and sympathy are with the families

5 June	Eileen Howells	St Andrew's by the Sea, Whitianga and 6 June at Newstead Crematorium
10 June	Betty Mayall	Chapel of Rest, Takapuna
18 June	Irene Innes	Pyes Pa Chapel, Tauranga



A word from Mary...

Dear Friends

As Val has discovered on her journey through life, God is always there to provide strength and support, and God loves you. Whoever you are, whatever you think, whatever you have done, however far you may have wandered, **GOD LOVES YOU.**

That is a wonderful assurance for everyone. I also want to assure you that God can give you the strength and wisdom to use your gifts and skills to provide what other people need - just as Val has. **Each person has different abilities but all are needed** to keep our community functioning well. You may not think you have practical abilities but everyone can offer a smile and encouragement. You all have 'a ministry'.

At the recent *Honouring Volunteers* service in National Volunteers week we celebrated and honoured all kinds of volunteers. They are the oil that keeps the community moving. **Thank you to all who use your gifts and skills, time and energy to help others.**

Many volunteers are involved in the community ministry based at St Andrews – especially the regular activities every week that need scores of helpers, like the Op Shop, Mainly Music, Upright and Active and the Community Meals. Thank you all for your faithful service.

Another theme from Val's story is **spiritual healing**. If you have been 'damaged' in your spiritual life by what others have said or done to you, or just your life experiences, I hope you will recognise that humans make mistakes but God can be trusted. Sometimes it is our image of God that needs healing. The God I know is full of love - not vengeful or judgemental. **God bless you.**

Mary

#####

IF YOU NEED PRAYER, FOR YOURSELF OR OTHERS, there are people ready to pray with you at the front of the Church every Sunday after the morning service.

We also have a **prayer chain** - a group of people who are willing to pray for anyone, without necessarily knowing the name, but being aware of the situation to be prayed for. Contact the church office, 867 1102, if you want to share a need for prayer or email Mary mjpetersen@xtra.co.nz



Coroglen Service

as reported by Beryl Wharton

At 11:30am on the 14th of June, 2015, our Church held a Service of Worship at the 'Gumtown Hall' in Coroglen. As this Hall is used on a Sunday most of the year for the local Farmers' Market, we as a Church only have the opportunity of using it for one - or sometimes two - services between June and September. It's since the demolition of the Whenuakite Hall, 4 or 5 years ago, that we have taken up this opportunity.

Those present on the 14th of June were blessed with a lovely service led by Mary Petersen who spoke on 'Faith, hope and love'. Sue Donovan played a musical keyboard, and Linda Stephenson sang to us.

There were 28 present.

The **Coroglen** locals were Elizabeth Temple, Heather McPhee, Roger & Betty Simpson, Fiona & Hannah Murphy, Ben, Jasmin, Will & Amelia Lockhart and Libby Griffen (Lockhart). From **Whenuakite** there were Dawn Walker, Jill Pitu, Sue Donovan, Phillip & Beryl Wharton. From **Pauanui**, Karen, Tim, Sophie & Rebecca Clarke with cousin Jamie Bowman from Taupo. **Whitianga** was represented by Robert Middleton, Paul Daniels, Peter & Dorothy Chaffin (parents of Fiona and grandparents of Hannah), Linda Stephenson, Mary Petersen and her sister Val.

To conclude, a lovely shared lunch was enjoyed by all.

Special Events for your Diary

Messy Church on 2 August (no July session). All families with children of all ages welcome to come and join in the fun activities, Bible story time, and with a meal provided.

Communion 5 July, 2 August, 6 September

Worship at St Andrew's by the Sea Community Church 9:30am every Sunday.

Children are always welcome – Bible activities are provided for children to explore while seated with their parents; there is a quiet corner with toys at the back of the church; or older children may choose to learn with a Bible teacher in the lounge.

Combined Churches Prayer meetings: praying together for our community, **10am to 11:15am Wednesdays. 5 August** at St Andrew's, **2 September** at Whitianga Baptist, **7 October** at Crossroad Encounter Fellowship

Combined Churches Meal and Service at 5pm, on 30 August at Crossroads Encounter Fellowship

Christening of Emily Christensen, Saturday 1 August at St Andrews 2pm - all welcome

Coromandel-Hauraki Mission Cluster meeting at Thames, Saturday 22 August, 10am-3:30pm

Church Family Farewell to Mary

You are all warmly invited to OUR Church Family Farewell to Rev Mary Petersen.



On **Sunday 23rd August**, Mary will conduct her last morning Worship with us, and we hope to see a packed church!

Following the service, and a short break for morning tea, we will bid Mary 'Thank You', 'Farewell, and God go with you,' We will present our gift, and there will be a chance for folk to say a personal word to Mary as we share a pot-luck lunch. We know Mary has touched many lives during her 12-year tenure in this Parish, and we hope to see all our locals, and out-of-towns, at this important gathering.

If you are able to make a contribution to the lunch, that will be appreciated. For further information, please ring Dorothy 869 5452 or email dorothy.preece@worldnz.net.nz

Parish Council News

Your Parish Councillors are working with the Presbyterian Ministry Settlement Board, to make plans for the future of ministry in the Mercury Bay Parish. The process will officially begin after August 30th when Mary is no longer with us. At that time, or soon afterwards, we will be asked to present a 'Five-Year Strategy Plan' outlining our long-term goals for the parish, and how we hope to achieve them. The congregation, and others, will be asked for their views on this as we get further into the process.

As things stand at present, there is no money to employ another minister. We now have NO financial reserves. Therefore we may well be reliant on own people, to provide worship and all of the church's community programmes in the future.

It is obvious to all of us, that first, we need prayer.

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR GUIDANCE

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR MORE TEAM MEMBERS

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR FINANCE

We know that God will direct our thinking, and enable us, if only we will trust God. Please pray! Pray that God will guide us to find the direction, the people, and the finance to carry on into the future.

If YOU have a special interest in any of our church programmes (listed on the back of this Newsletter) **NOW** is the time to front up - This community needs you. Likewise, if you have any fundraising ideas, we want to hear from you.

Also, Parish Council is busy organising a **public farewell for Mary**, to which the whole community is invited. This will be held at **St Andrew's, on Saturday 29th August at 2 pm**, followed by afternoon tea. We expect a large crowd, so helpers, and food contributions, will be very welcome.

Thank you.

Parish and Community Activities

Newcomers are cordially invited to join any of these friendly groups

CHURCH OP-SHOP (behind the Church building, on Owen Street) Phone 867 1104

Open 9 – 12:30 Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Thank you for supporting the op-shop, helping the work of our Parish and many other local causes. Please leave clean goods at workroom entrance - **and watch the notices for special sale days**

COMMUNITY MEALS in the Church hall from 5-6pm every Monday. Providing free, hot, nutritious meals and friendship. Volunteers & donations welcome. Enquiries to Val 027 252 4453 or phone the Church on Mondays 867 1102

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP All welcome. Held 2nd Wednesday of every month, 1:30pm in members' homes. For programme and venue details please ring Beryl Wharton 866 3739 or Ann Harsant 866 4740

FILM and FRIENDSHIP currently in recess. Watch for future notices

LADIES BIBLE STUDY Wednesday 10am Please ring Julie for information: 984 9140



Music and fun for babies, toddlers and their carers. Thursdays 10:00 am in school terms. Music begins promptly at 10 a.m. followed by morning tea, friendship and playtime. **We need leaders** - if you can help, please come to a session and talk to Rev Mary Petersen and team.

MESSY CHURCH An exciting Sunday experience for all the family, including food! **2 August.** For more info contact Mary 869 5356 or text 027 244 8396 or email mjpetersen@xtra.co.nz

P.R.O.P. People Relying on People. Supporting families battling mental health and substance abuse issues. For confidential support, freephone 0800 127 359.

TE KOROWAI MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY GROUP meets Thursdays, 11:30, at St Andrew's hall. Phone Robyn Campbell 869 5244 for details of meeting dates

TOUGHLOVE Behavioural support Anyone challenged by the behaviour of someone in their family is encouraged to talk to Nicole 866 5119 or Mary 869 5356

UPRIGHT & ACTIVE Two friendly exercise sessions for seniors, held in the Church hall

Mondays at 9:30am Leader Carol Melrose 867 1097

Tuesdays at 10:00am Leader Brenda Duncan 866 5814

WORSHIP AT CONTINUING CARE A Combined Churches event providing devotions every Wednesday at 10:45am in the residents' lounge. Supporters are welcome on any Wednesday. St Andrew's leads on the first and fifth Wednesday of the month.

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH -St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church

Corner Albert and Owen Streets, Whitianga / PO Box 368, WHITIANGA

Minister: Rev Mary Petersen 07 869 5356 or 027 244 8396

Office: 867 1102 or standrewswhitianga@xtra.co.nz

Hall bookings: Church office 867 1102 ; Newsletter editor: Charlotte Christensen 867 1234