

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church

Newsletter Decmeber 2016 / January 2017

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

Walk-Through Christmas 2016



'Happy Birthday Jesus' was this year's theme for the 14th Combined Churches annual 'Walk-through Christmas'.

Around 200 primary school children, ages 5 -8 came through the churches in five separate class groups. Mercury Bay Area School started the morning-long procession, walking from the school to arrive at Crossroad Encounter Fellowship at 9:30. There, the Anglican team led by Rev Gillian Reid

explained that Christmas is really Jesus' Birthday, and called for volunteers to put presents on the tree, telling the Biblical story as they went. Because of problems with St Peter's Church building, they were hosted at Crossroad this year. Three more groups of MBAS children followed the leaders at half-hourly intervals.

St Patrick's Catholic Church in Campbell Street was next on the tour. There Lillian Munn and the team talked about the preparations for Christmas that happen at home, Advent calendars and the countdown to Christmas Day, linking it all into the Bible accounts of prophesy and the Annunciation to Mary and Joseph.

At St Andrew's Dorothy Preece told the whole story in a beautiful poem that Diana Campbell-Barnaby had had stowed away for years. Julie St George found a wealth of pictures for the overhead screen which kept the children absorbed and attentive. (We had practiced the sequence several times, but we were both very relieved when it went off without a hitch the first time.)

The four MBAS groups were followed at 11:30 by a combined group of Te Rerenga and Coroglen School children, making five groups in all. We finally

finished at 1 pm. After each group finished at St Andrew's, they were treated to home-made biscuits and Raro juice. Thank you, cookie makers! You responded wonderfully well to the call for cookies. It was a lot of walking for the little ones, and by the time they finished at St Andrew's they needed that sugar fix!

As is their tradition, Madeleine and John Saunders kindly decorated the tree and arranged the table-top nativity scene in time to make the Walk-through event special.

Gillian, Lillian and Dorothy had prepared gift envelopes for each child, with things to make and do. A Christmas card, a bookmark and the Bible Society activity, 'To you, from God'.

We are all very much aware that this might be the only time that the majority of children will hear the Biblical story of Christmas. It is a sad fact that many of the children these days don't even know the words to 'Away in a manger'. We hope and pray that some aspect of our combined work will stay with them, and with the young parents and teachers who bring them through. Our poem finished:



*'And now today around the world, and in New Zealand too,
We still remember Jesus is God's gift to me and you.
And so, on Christmas morning, when you look at all your things,
Be glad it's Jesus' Birthday, with all the happiness that brings!*

A Christmas message

by John Twemlow

I wonder how many people have been born on the 25th December?

I happened to be reading an article on birthdays, and discovered that worldwide about 172,000 babies are born every Christmas day. So Jesus didn't have this all to himself.

Actually it's more likely he was born at an earlier time than we celebrate anyway!

In the year 336 the Roman Emperor Constantine made the decision to celebrate Jesus' birth on the 25th December, and so almost everyone, including non-Christians celebrate this day in one form or another.

Knowing for sure which day Jesus was born is not the most important aspect of this celebration. What is important is that God's plan for our "completeness" was to find fulfilment in that birth, and the life and death that followed.

God knew all of humanity was not complete without him. So in contrast to so many other religions, this was not a call for us to make our way UP to him, but for him to make his way DOWN to us. And this he did in the most spectacular way possible.

THINK about these words; DUNG, DONKEY and DEATH. God's objective was and is to IDENTIFY with his creation, you and me. He knows what we have gone through in life, and what we are going through right now.

And so when Jesus was born, he was in no satin lined bassinet in a perfumed filled, sanitised birth centre; no it was an animal's food trough in a dung smelling cow shed.

During his 3 years of ministry, no doubt some of his followers gave him lodgings, but Jesus himself said on more than one occasion that he had no permanent home, not even a house bus.

And then there was the time not long before his crucifixion, when he came into the city of Jerusalem as a king! However there was no golden carriage driven by six white horses available for him. He rode on a humble donkey, revealing once again his nature was not worldly wealth but poverty.

And then finally at his death it was not a jewel encrusted crown he had on his head but a crown of thorns.

I suppose this Christmas, for some, it will be BEACHES, BLING and BARBEQUES, but for a moment can we stop and think how Jesus entered this world and reached down to us in all our needs. Can I suggest we also reach out to those in need and bring the presence of Christmas.



Parish Register

Funerals at St. Andrew's

October 29th—David Wallace Menzies
(St Andrew's)

November 20th—Alan Charles Askew
(St Peter's @ St Andrew's)



Our sympathies are with the families

Monday Meals Update

Val Ranson and her team work very hard to keep the meals coming every Monday. Not all those who get meals are financially strapped - some just find life very hard to cope with. It is God's work, and Parish Council wants to see it continue. We really appreciate the automatic bank payments, generous cash payments and donations of food from supporters. Your support gives us the courage to continue. At the same time, we take every opportunity to apply to the charitable funders for donations.

Val's contract to co-ordinate the meals, and to occupy the manse, will finish on February 1st. We very much hope to renew Val's work contract, but it will depend on her finding alternative accommodation at a difficult time of the year. Please pray, and keep eyes and ears open for an affordable home for Val and the family.

Missions/Outreach—Little Flower Update

A little reminder of the update from last newsletter that the period for donations has been extended to the end of February, so this could be a great Christmas gift idea.

Donations are currently sitting at a little under \$5000, which is about a quarter of the funds hoped for in order to provide new flooring, bedding and bathrooms at the Little Flower Children's Home.

For more information and the methods to donate, go to:

<https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/littleflowerchildrenshome>

A little inspiration

A Christmas poem by Shirley Murray

Come to this Christmas, singing.
Come to Christ's Birthday bringing
Gifts from our country's treasure,
Beauty of shell and stone;
Wisdom the old have taught us;
Laughter the young have brought us;
Love to surround a manger,
Making this Child our own.

Wealth of our land and water,
Riches of race and culture,
These be our gold and incense
Offered for Christmas Day.
Where we make peace – declare it!
Where we have much - let's share it!
May aroha warm our hearts,
And aroha be our way.

Excerpt from "I am the light of the world" by Gary Davis

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the shepherds
have found their way home,
The work of Christmas is begun!*

*I am the Light of the world.
You people come and follow me!
If you follow and love
You'll learn the mystery
Of what you were meant to do and be.*

Parish Council Update

For more than a year now, St Andrew's has been operating without a minister, under the guidance of Rev Jacqui Cavit (Tauranga) as our Superintendent Moderator. Financially, we cannot hope to appoint a minister full-time, but if we keep an open mind, the future still holds many options - some of which God has yet to show us.

One option that has been suggested, is sharing a minister with the Thames and Trinity Parishes, which would cover Thames, Coromandel, Whangamata, Tairua, Pauanui and Whitianga. Such a minister would be appointed by Presbytery, and the Parish would pay a percentage of the stipend, plus mileage and travel time.

We may be able to afford this option, but the idea has only just been mooted and it is early days.

Another option could be that we identify what the Parish needs in the way of professional skills, and bring in a person to help in those areas, under a private employment contract. That person could live in the manse, or we could rent the manse to other tenants at market rental... Anything is possible! To quote Robin Twemlow, "The Spirit can remove all the obstacles!"

Sharing the Church with St Peter's

It is a very encouraging experience, to meet another worshipping congregation on a Sunday morning, and to get to know them. With St Peter's fellowship now sharing the space, we have been learning more about them, and enjoying some very lively morning teas.

As the St Andrew's service finishes, we are greeted with the smell of real coffee and friendly smiles of the St Peter's congregation as they gather for their 11 am service. We have also noticed the regular appearance of chocolate cake or carrot cake – definitely a step up!

The new routine has been seamless for St Andrew's, and we have tried to make it so for St Peter's people too. It seems St Peter's may be using the church and hall for quite some time, so this enjoyable interaction will continue for a while yet. You will see the St Peter's Christmas service events listed alongside St Andrew's on the Worship Schedule in this newsletter.

Worship Opportunities

Services at St Andrew's: starting at 9:30

Your Parish Council takes every opportunity to invite visiting preachers who are known to us, and therefore to provide a wide range of Gospel-based worship and teaching. We thank all of our worship leaders most sincerely for their willing work.

Dec	Sun	11	<i>Christmas music service—come, sing your favourites</i>
	Wed	14	<i>2pm Christmas communion service, John & Robin Twemlow. Afternoon tea follows</i>
			<i>7:30pm (St Peter's @ St Andrew's): 'Remembered at Christmas' a quiet service</i>
	Fri	16	<i>7:30pm Community Carols at Soldier's Memorial Park</i> <i>Bring the family!</i>
	Sun	18	<i>Robin Twemlow</i>
	Sat	24	<i>7:30pm Kuaotunu Community Carols, John & Robin Twemlow</i>
			<i>8pm (St Peter's @ St Andrew's): Christmas Eve service</i>
	Sun	25	<i>9:30 Christmas Day family service, Dorothy Preece</i>
Jan	Sun	1	<i>Worship and new year communion, John Twemlow</i>
	Sun	8	<i>Rev Viv Coleman</i> <i>10am Holiday service at Kuaotunu Hall, John & Robin Twemlow</i>
	Sun	15	<i>Ross Millar</i>
	Sun	22	<i>Alistair Rogers</i>
	Sun	29	<i>Dorothy Preece</i>

Worship at Continuing Care

A short service of songs and prayer is held at 11am every Wednesday at CCU, led by the Churches in turn. St Andrew's leads on the first Wednesday of the month. **Supporters and helpers are warmly invited.**

Christian World Service Christmas Appeal 2016

Christian World Service 'Action Against Poverty' is fighting war and want in trouble spots all around the world. Wherever help is needed, CWS is there. Every year we receive posters, information and donation envelopes. Please look for these when you come into the church. If you would like to donate, you can post the envelope, or you can place it in the offertory. On Christmas Day all of the loose cash in the offertory goes to CWS, along with any envelopes that have been handed in. If you can, please donate to this important mission.

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 Wednesday to Saturday.**

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. 2nd Wednesday of every month 1:30pm. For programme/venue details: Beryl Wharton 866 3739 or Ann Harsant 866 4740

FAMILY COUNSELLING Anyone who needs advice or family counselling is encouraged to contact Nicole 866 5119

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

MESSY CHURCH An exciting Sunday experience for all the family, including food!

For info & session dates, please contact Robin Twemlow (869 5054) or Val Ransome (027 252 4453)

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

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

Mondays at 9:30am Leader Carol Melrose 867 1097

Tuesdays at 10:00am Leader Greta Fox 866 4382

WORSHIP AT CONTINUING CARE A Combined Churches event providing devotions every Wednesday at 11am in the residents' lounge. Supporters are welcome on any Wednesday. St Andrew's leads on the first and fifth Wednesday of the month.

St Andrew's services begin at 9:30 ; St Peter's services follow

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

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

Church website: www.standrewsbythesea.org.nz

Parish secretary: Dorothy Preece 869 5452 dorothy.preece@worldnz.net.nz

Church office & hall bookings: 867 1102 or standrewswhitianga@gmail.com

Newsletter editor: Charlotte Christensen 867 1234 or strettoc@gmail.com