

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's Community Church Newsletter

December 2023-January 2024

Our Mission in this Parish is to bring the saving love of Christ to all whom we meet, and by our example to encourage them to follow Him.



Our people and their stories - Mary Hall



Mary joined our fellowship when she moved to Whitianga with her husband Geoff in 2015. Sadly, Geoff died very recently. Our prayers are with Mary as she courageously shares their story: Mary grew up in a place few of us have ever heard of – Lumphinnans, near Dunfermline in Scotland. (We love her Scots accent.) She was the second of nine children. Her parents, Jessie and George Gorniak were not church-goers but Mary and her sisters used to like go to the local

Salvation Army on Sundays. “We enjoyed it, and it was somewhere to go on Sundays.”

Mary went to Beath High School and left at 15 to become a machinist in a clothing factory – a skill that she followed for 40 years!

Her best friend was Agnes, and she boarded with Agnes’ Mum.

“We loved dancing,” Mary says. “We lived close to the Rosyth Naval Base. We used to go to dances there and danced with the Navy boys.”

Geoff Hall was one of those handsome Navy boys. Mary was 20 and Geoff was 21 when they met. He was from Worcester. “Three times he asked me to marry him,” Mary says. “The third time, he told me was getting posted to Portsmouth and was going away. So then I said Yes.” In 1973, just one year after they met, Mary married Geoff at Crossgates Church. There was no time for a honeymoon. Newly married, they shifted to the Portsmouth Naval Base and it became clear that Geoff, as a marine engineer, would be spending a lot of time away on the ships.

“Geoff was a good man. He loved being in the Navy but he didn’t want to leave me. So he gave it up and we moved to his home town in Worcester.” Geoff took a job in a factory, but he hated it. There were now two little girls in the family. Lurna was born in 1976 and Sophie in 77. Mary had her hands full, but she went back to work as a machinist as soon as she could.

“I was reading the paper one day and saw an advertisement inviting applications for the New Zealand Navy. I persuaded Geoff to apply, and of course, he got in. We came to Devonport Naval Base in 1980.

It took us three years to really settle in, but we weren’t too homesick.

Geoff loved the Navy and we had a lovely home in Northcote.”

Mary once again took a job as a machinist in Takapuna. She had not connected with a church since the early Salvation Army days, but their girls were both baptised in England and they went to Sunday School at a little church in Northcote. Mary became concerned because the Pastor was putting a lot of pressure on the children about having to be saved. “I told them, Don’t worry. Jesus knows all about you.”

“There were no dances, but there were lots of parties at the Naval Base.

The Junior Ratings’ Mess had better parties than the Seniors’ Mess.”

Geoff had to be away on the ships for long periods, all round the Pacific and beyond, so Mary and the girls had to get on with life without him for a lot of the time. “I just loved being a Mum. I still do.” And of course, she made all their clothes and loved dressing the girls.

With another Naval couple, Mary and Geoff came to Whitianga for a holiday in the late ‘80’s. “We all had kids, and we stayed in a motel. It rained and rained, and we spent the week penned up indoors. We didn’t see much of the area, but we liked what we saw of it.”

At age 40 Mary was diagnosed with the onset of Multiple Sclerosis. It was a devastating blow for them. "I didn't feel unwell, but I got attacks every six months or so." For years Mary was having injections every week, but she felt they were not helping, so she stopped them.

Mary and Geoff bought their own home in Glenfield. Geoff was still in the Navy and the girls were both doing well at school. Mary was coping with her MS and she got a job that she really loved, as a machinist for Zeus Sportswear. "There were only four machinists and the Boss was a lovely man." When Geoff retired from the Navy they moved to Rotorua, into a house that was specially set up for Mary's condition. As the disease progressed she had to use a wheelchair. "We were not really happy in Rotorua. We were too far away from the girls. They both had their own homes by this time, and the grandchildren were coming along." Sophie lived in Auckland and Lurna had taken a job with TCDC and moved to Kuaotunu. So the decision was made, to come to Whitianga – previously seen only in the rain!

Mary and Geoff bought a home in Seascapes Ave and that was when we first met Mary at St Andrew's. This brave lady came to church all on her own, in a wheelchair of course, and we welcomed her with open arms. "I don't know what brought me to church - I just know I needed to come - just for me." The kitchen at Seascapes Ave proved to be too small for Mary to get around, so they moved to a lovely home in Acacia Court, with a spacious kitchen and lovely decks. The grandchildren are all in their teens now, and they often visit.

It was a terrible blow when Geoff was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer earlier this year. Mary has suffered a devastating loss, but she is getting through with the help of her girls, her carers and her friends. "I just can't believe he's gone," she says.

Mary would love to come to church more often, but very often she can't get ready in time to come. "I do enjoy coming to church, everyone is very friendly. I don't know much about the Bible, but I do know Someone up there gets me through."

Her door is always open for visitors. Mary is well cared for in her own home, and she is brave. "I'm a strong woman," she says, and we all agree with that!

Thank you Mary. You are always in our prayers.

Christmas Carol

The following Christmas Carol was written by Kevin Pringle in his younger days. He got the idea from the Seekers' song – 'The Strangest Dream'.



The strangest dream God ever dreamed, Not many
people saw.

The Son of God was born this day, Upon a stable floor.
The angels sang, the shepherds came, But they could only stare.
They marvelled at the Grace of God, The baby lying there.

The wise men came, they'd seen the star that notified His birth.
They followed it from lands afar, To see God's Son on Earth.
Though Kings they were, to King they came, Though lowly was His birth
And gifts they bought, all finely wrought, Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

His mother mild looked on her babe, This miracle she'd birthed
And while she watched, it made her sad, That no one knew His worth.
So well she knew:- she had been told, The pain that she would bear.
She could not know that on the cross She'd see him hanging there.

The strangest dream God ever dreamed -
The cross for us He bore.
He will return as King again
To put an end to war.

May your Christmas be blessed with peace and love, and may you see the Saviour in the innocence of a little child.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6, NIV

Funeral

The Funeral of **Dawn Higgins** was held at St Andrew's on November 1st, conducted by Pastor Mike Walker. We hold this family in love and prayer.



In Memoriam

With sadness we record the death of **Geoff Hall**, husband of Mary Hall, our friend at St Andrew's. Geoff died on October 7th. Please pray for Mary, who has lost her soul-mate and is dependant on carers for her daily needs.

Also our sister **Val Wilkins**, a faithful member of the church, died on 5th November at Waikato Hospital. Val served the Opshop for many years. Please pray for her husband Dave and the family.

With sadness we also record the passing of **Ann Harsant**, a long-time resident of Hahei, lately in a rest home in Pukekohe. For many years Ann attended services at the old Whenuakite Hall, and came to St Andrew's when the hall closed. Our prayers are with the family.

A further sadness, as we mark the passing of **Murray Blake**, son of our dear friend Barbara Blake. Murray lived in the South Island and suffered from Muscular Dystrophy. We hold Barbara and the family in love and prayer.



Church and Parish Donations: Mercury Bay Co-operating Parish
BNZ Whitianga: **02 0496 0062562 00**

Monday Meals Donations: Mercury Bay Community Support Trust
Westpac Whitianga: **03 1578 0108901 00**

From the Pulpit

Last month Bill Woodward took as his text a passage from Amos 7:7:

“God said, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people.” Bill reminded us that Christ is the straight and true cornerstone of our faith. If we build our lives on Him, we can’t go wrong. Jesus is the living example of how our Father wants us to live on this earth, but we need to keep on checking the plumb line and look only to Him, so as not to get off-centre or lose our focus. Anxiety over the issues of the day, or new, fashionable, ‘PC’ church thinking can confuse us.

***“Turn your eyes upon Jesus – look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.”***

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Andrew Doubleday

Andrew shares interesting bits and pieces in his weekly Update and it’s always a good read. A couple of weeks ago he shared some of the findings of a recent Church Life Survey:

“The emphasis expressing confidence for growth was clearly biased towards those churches with younger congregations. **I do not share this pessimism. By conviction and experience, I am convinced that congregations of older people can thrive...**

“I am becoming one of them. The need for ministry does not diminish with age – we become more aware that we are facing one of life’s greatest challenges – the end of life! Ministry with the aged is ... underrated and undervalued in the Church, yet it should be regarded with a sense of urgency and priority. Ministry with older people presents both a challenge and a rich opportunity, if only we can see it and grasp it...”

If you would like to receive Andrew’s weekly Update, you can request it at office@ucanz.org.nz

Worship at St Andrew's, 9:30 every Sunday

Dec	3rd	Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby (Communion)
	10th	Rev John Twemlow
	17th	Carol service - Jan Bates
	24th	Dorothy Preece
	25th	Christmas Day Family Service Dorothy Preece
	31st	Ross McCook (see note below)
Jan	7th	Rev Viv Coleman (Communion)
	14th	Kevin Pringle
	21st	Dorothy Preece
	28th	Deacon Margaret Birtles



For the carol service on Sunday December 17th

Jan Bates asked us to choose our favourite carols –
In all, 25 people responded. Thank you all.

Here are the results:

Top favourite is *Silent Night*, chosen by 4 people.

Second is *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, with 3 votes.

Third – jointly with 2 votes each:

– *O Come All Ye Faithful*, *Te Harinui* and *Hark, the Herald Angels sing*.

The other choices will be revealed on the day.

There will be services on **Sunday 24th December** and a family service on **Christmas Day, Monday 25th**. Please encourage your visitors to bring the children.

Ross McCook will bring the Word to us on December 31st.

He will tell us about his work with young people, through a Christian organisation 'Heart for Youth'. Ross is the son of Barbara McCook, known to many of us as a very strong local Christian.

We are delighted to welcome Ross to our pulpit.

Parish and Community Information

Some groups will be in recess for the holiday period

- Monday **Upright & Active** 9am weekly exercise for active seniors
Contact Carol 867 1097
Manawa Kai Heart Food Kitchen community meals
takeaway only, every Monday 3:30-5pm.
Contact Maureen 027 246 6164
- Tuesday **Exercise for the less active** 9am weekly
Contact Kathy 021 254 2769 or Wendy 027 721 5113
Stitch n' Chat fortnightly 1:30-4pm in the Hamilton
Room. Contact Julie 021 169 1637
Enliven (Presbyterian Support for the Elderly) weekly
Contact Jenny 021 071 9539
- Wednesday **Ladies' Bible Study** 10am weekly
Contact Julie 021 169 1637
Inter-Church Women's Fellowship Monthly.
Contact Annie 866 3711
Scrapbags quilting group 10am weekly.
Contact Robin 866 5029
Parkinsons Support 6-weekly.
For dates and times contact Keith 027 459 8683
- Thursday **Enliven** (Presbyterian Support for the Elderly) weekly
Contact Jenny 021 071 9539
- Friday **Cancer Support Coffee Morning**
First Friday of each month. Contact Ruth 021 363 840

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St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church

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