

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's Community Church Newsletter

April-May 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 - Damon Christensen



Damon is a very familiar figure at church and around town. He is the go-to person for everything electrical, including sound systems and all the churches keep him busy - some might say “too busy” - but as you will discover, Damon’s just a guy who can’t say no!

Damon (Baptist) and Charlotte (Presbyterian) share in both congregations. Damon more than qualifies as one of ‘our people’ here at St Andrew’s, and it’s high time he got our thanks and recognition

for all that he does.

The Christensen family lived in Papatoetoe. They began their acquaintance with Whitianga in 1993 when Damon’s parents, Murray and Lyn, bought a section in Punga Place and planned to build a home there. Damon was 15, and he and his brother Kent were already very involved with their parents’ work as youth leaders in the AOG Church in Papatoetoe. Very soon they were bringing groups of 11-14 yr olds to Whitianga, camping out on the section and engaging in community projects, such as renovating the playground at the Central Kindergarten in Eyre Street. “We had movie nights and discos and sometimes Dad took them fishing. There was Bible study every evening,” Damon recalls.

Damon trained as an electrician with Electrix Ltd. “When I was about seven Dad gave me my own model trains layout, and I managed to wire it up myself, with 16 sets of electrical points. Back then, Dad suggested I should become an electrician.”

Damon took an apprenticeship doing industrial and commercial work. Electrix had the contract for Telecom work, and after the contract shifted to Downer, Damon went with his former boss to work directly for Downer. They were responsible for regular maintenance and upgrades for Telecom, all around the Bay of Plenty and the Auckland region. This

saw Damon working 15-16 hour days. "I really loved the work, but something needed to change."

The same former boss encouraged Damon to start his own business, and Diode Electrical Services was born in 2006. His parents had moved permanently to Whitianga in 2005. Damon already owned a section in Captain Wood Avenue and had built a garage on it.

In 2008 he moved the business to Whitianga, working from the garage and sleeping at his parents' home. His move to Whitianga brought Damon to the Baptist Fellowship where his parents were. "I took on the running of the Sunday School in Whitianga about a year before I actually moved here," Damon says. "The person running it had left, and my Dad put me in for the job, because through my parents' work I had a lot of experience with young people.

"I travelled from Auckland to Whitianga every weekend and ran the Sunday School. I only missed four Sundays in that year. When I first took it on, the kids weren't very keen on the Sunday School room, but we worked together to improve the space and they began to enjoy the sessions and eventually I was able to enlist other helpers."

Damon continued to work for Downer as an independent contractor, but after fibre came along, that only amounted to about 6 months' work each year and he had to find other work. It didn't take long for people – especially church people – to be calling him for help with all manner of work. "Crossroad Church building was nearing completion, and I did a lot of electrical work for them. Then all the churches were ringing me to fix stuff, help with sound systems, lighting, everything."

Damon helped with his first Day Camp in 2008, on the Sherriff property at Whenuakite. His church work was growing along with his day job.

In 2012 Damon married Charlotte, a Presbyterian girl from Papatoetoe. They had known each other since they were five, but the romance took a long while to blossom. Charlotte was working in Wellington and Damon was established in Whitianga by the time they were engaged and they had to work out how things would work for their life together. They were both 35 when they were married at St Andrew's in Whitianga. Rev Mary Petersen officiated at their wedding.

"It was God's perfect timing," Charlotte says. She was able to continue her employment with the National Library in Wellington, by

working remotely from Whitianga. Their house was built in stages as the children, Emily and Nathan, came along and Damon became the full-time day shift Dad, while working the night shift at The Warehouse. These days, with both children now at school, Damon can take on more electrical work.

Damon has always helped with Day Camp, and in 2015 took responsibility for the Teen Leaders for a few years, teams of young people who look after the younger ones. To motivate them, Damon introduced the Team Cup (actually a champagne bucket filled with chocolate) to the team who performs best each year: a hotly contested prize!

Damon is full of innovative ideas which keep him busy and enhance all of the areas of activity which he takes on. His early modelling days led Damon to the formation of the Mercury Bay Model Railway Club www.mbmrc.org. This in turn led to the Model Railway Show which he arranges in July each year, this year to be held in the Whitianga Town Hall with both locals and non-locals showing off their hobbies. He is also now the Waikato representative to the NZ Association of Model Railway Clubs.

He owns a 3-D printer and an engraving machine and in 2021 was commissioned by the Mercury Bay Museum to build a complete model of Whitianga township as it was in 1943. "It has 16 light circuits, so any part of the model can light up on request," Damon says. He now also works regular volunteer hours for the museum, chipping in with organising new displays and keeping old ones running.

Damon is the Chairperson for the Whitianga Combined Churches Committee, which means as well as organising the meetings, he is responsible for lighting and sound systems whenever that committee or any individual church has an event to organise. "Carols in the Park at Christmas is a lot of work," Damon says. "This year I think I'll hand that on to someone else to organise." Even so, last Christmas 2023 Damon decided all the churches in town should be lit with fairy lights, and it happened, thanks to Damon who so freely gives his time to such projects. "The churches need to be visible at Christmas," Damon says.

Speaking of events, Damon also provides sound and lighting for the Anzac Day dawn service, getting up hours before dawn to set up, whatever the weather.

His heart for Christ, and for young people, has led Damon to organise the Light Party as a Hallowe'en alternative each year. He seems to be on call night and day for anything any church needs. He is usually responsible

for the sound and screen on Sundays at the Baptist Church, where Damon is on the Church Board . He is now working on live streaming church services, funerals and weddings. Meanwhile, his day job sees him carrying out electrical maintenance contracts with businesses in town.

To supplement his income, Damon does 3-D modelling and hires out his sound and lighting equipment, often needing to be involved in the setup and packdown even when he is not running the equipment for the event. He also keeps involved with the kids, regularly taking Emily and Nathan to after school activities. “This season I’m taking on the job of 8th Grade soccer coach at for the local club,” he casually remarks as we finish.

Damon – we are in awe! We don’t know how you do it all, but we love you and we really appreciate you! Thank you!

From the Pulpit:

On Easter Sunday as we entered the church we were rather confused to see, laid out in front, a crown of thorns, a purple robe, a hammer and nails, a bowl and jug. We had already ‘done’ Good Friday. This was Easter Day? Where was Rev Shirley going with this? She enlisted the help of Martin and Madeline to take part in a dramatic liturgy: ***‘The Transformation of the Friday Shadows.’***

We have been asked to repeat it here:

“On Friday the crown of thorns played its part. It mocked the King of Kings. Now it is the symbol of Suffering Love.”

Martin carried the crown out of the church.

“On Friday the purple robe played its part. It insulted a bleeding body. Now it wraps its truth around the Lord of the Universe.”

Madeline carried out the robe.

“On Friday the basin played its part. Guilty hands washed their sin away. But now, the spotless hands of the Redeemer wipe our sin away.”

Martin carried out the bowl and jug.

“On Friday the hammer and nails played their part. They pinned the Saviour to the cross. But they proved too weak to pin down Love.

Madeleine carried out the hammer and nails.

With the removal of each item, the congregation proclaimed –

“Christ is risen indeed!”

With all items removed, the liturgy continued with pictures on screen:

“On Friday the tomb played its part. It did its worst. It buried the Saviour, with the certainty of an ending.

But the tomb was not final enough to end Love.

“Christ is risen indeed!”

On Friday the cross played its part. It did its worst. But the cross too, was powerless to finish Love.

“For there is no end to Love.

There is always Life in death. There is always dancing at dawn;

There is always sunrise after the deepest darkness.

There is always Eternity in the everyday.

There is always, always, always Love.”

Funerals at St Andrew’s

Feb 10th - Elaine Liliās (Lil) Barclay

Jo Martin officiating

Mar 9th - Seonid Anne Horne

Mike Renner officiating

Mar 23rd - Judith Ann (Jude) Mills

Dorothy Preece officiating

We hold these families in our prayers



Advance Notice: Craft Exhibition is on again in June! Get ready!

This crafty weekend event was so successful last year that we immediately decided to make it a regular winter event. The date will be advertised soon.

All types of handcrafts can be displayed, and makers’ details attached if the work is for sale. It’s time to advertise this as widely as possible, to get those crafty hands moving and plan to display the work. All local craft groups, artisans, and individuals are invited to book table space (koha appreciated).

Dorothy will be away. Annie is the Organiser-in Chief. She will need help.

Contact Annie for updates and to signal your involvement in any way:

07 866 3711 - 027 322 3332 - pallynch@xtra.co.nz

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St Andrew’s Church Opshop—WINTER STOCK NOW IN

Come and check out the bargains – Re-love the planet!

Not-for-profit community groups are invited to apply for funding for local initiatives and projects. Apply in writing, giving outline of costs

Never too late to reflect on Easter.....

Easter came early this year, so as this Newsletter goes out we have already reflected on the confounding events of Good Friday and the miracle of Easter Day. On Easter Sunday a group of Christians from the local churches, and some visitors, gathered on Buffalo Beach as the sun came up, to bring praise and thanks to the Lord of all creation, and joyfully declare to one another:

“He is Risen!”

Reflecting once again, on the eternal and unfathomable mysteries of Easter, I am drawn to the story of the thief on the cross. Such a powerful account of the interaction between the criminal and the Christ – a pointer to the future that our Creator God offers, through Christ, to all who will simply turn to Him in faith. A pointer to God’s plan for the redemption of every soul on earth.

Luke 23:39 “One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at Jesus.

‘Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself, and us!’

The other one however, silenced him saying, ‘Don’t you fear God? His sentence is the same as ours, but our punishment is just. We are getting what we deserve for what we did. But this man has done no wrong.’ And he said to Jesus, ‘Remember me, Jesus when you come into your Kingdom.’ Jesus said to him,

‘I promise you that this day you will be with me in Paradise.’

Wow! THIS DAY! - Jesus didn’t ask whether that criminal knew the Scriptures. He didn’t ask how many times a day the thief prayed. He didn’t ask how many people the man had robbed. And He didn’t ask, “Why should I let you in?” That poor man knew he deserved punishment from men and from God – he said to his mate, “Don’t you fear God?” That tells us he recognised that Jesus was sent from God. So in hope, and trust, and faith, he turned to Jesus with his last breath and was rewarded with the Lord’s promise of forgiveness for all eternity. (Dorothy).

There was no other good enough, to pay the price of sin.

He only, could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.



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**

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

Apr	7th	Bill Woodward (Communion)
	14th	Russell Grainger
	21st	Ross Millar
	28th	Vanya Wallis* Presbytery Missioner
May	3rd	Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby (Communion)
	10th	Margaret Birtles* Methodist Synod
	17th	Julie and Bible Team
	24th	Kevin Pringle



Upcoming Parish Review

The Parish has not been reviewed since – we don't know when! Perhaps since we became a Co-operating Parish. The two parent churches, Presbyterian and Methodist, will send representatives from Kaimai Presbytery and Waikato-Wairiki Methodist Synod, to talk to the congregation and Parish Council to assess how we do things here, how effective we are as a Church, and what we might be able to do better or more efficiently. We hope as many people as possible will be able to participate in this discussion process.

On Sunday April 28th Kaimai Presbytery Missioner, Vanya Wallis will visit us and lead our worship. Vanya will also give us information about the review process and what it involves. A questionnaire will be circulated to our Fellowship members, in hard copies and/or by email. There will also be questions for Parish Council to answer. We all will then have a couple of weeks to compile those answers.

In early May, after the information has been received by the parent churches, they will compile a Summary Report.

On Sunday May 12th Deacon Margaret Birtles, representing the Methodist Synod, will take our service and lead informal discussions with the Fellowship over morning tea, followed by more in-depth discussions with Parish Council on the same day.

The final Report will be shared with Parish Council in late May, and this will be shared with the whole congregation in early June.



Parish and Community Information

Some groups will be in recess for the holiday period

- Monday **Upright & Active** 9am weekly exercise for active seniors
Contact Kathy 021 254 2769 or Wendy 027 721 5113
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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