

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's Community Church Newsletter

June-July 2025

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.

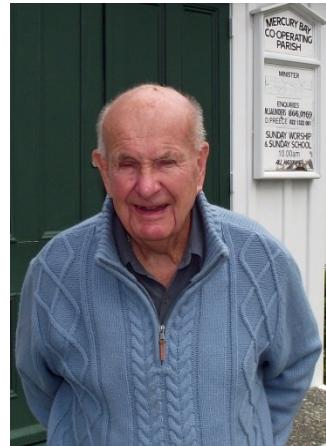
Our People and their Stories: Robin Lee

When Robin was born in 1936, Whitianga township was still in its infancy. There were no cars and no electricity. So when his mother, Beryl went into labour, his father, Otto, put her in the dinghy and rowed her along the beach to the hospital. It was either that or walk!

The family home was in Owen Street, right opposite the church. Robin was 'the baby' of 5 children, and church attendance was compulsory – especially when Grandfather William Lee was preaching. Sunday School and Bible Class were compulsory too, The Bible Class leader was Frank Broad, who also organised the choir, and Mrs Broad played the organ. Robin's three sisters had to clean the church on Saturdays. The church was lit by kerosene lamps which his father, Otto kept trimmed and lit. Otto also rang the bell before service.

One of his earliest memories was being in the dinghy with his Grandfather, going to Grandad William's farm up the estuary (now Bill Lee's farm). "There was a strong wind blowing and it was hard rowing. So my Grandad cut a branch off a mangrove tree and used it like a sail. We flew along. It was great! I think that's where I got my love of boats and sailing."

Robin's Dad earned a living wherever he could find work, building roads for the council or wherever else. "We were not a wealthy family," Robin says. "I didn't like going to school. It seemed to me that most folk were better off than us, plus I was left-handed and the teachers made my life miserable." Life got a bit better in 1951 when the new High School opened on South Highway. Robin was one of the first intake of 12 students. The headmaster was Mr Paul Taylor. Robin was a year older



than the others after diphtheria put him in Thames hospital and in recovery for almost a year. "The only way anyone could visit me was by bus." Leaving school, Robin worked for Smith and Ross, the grocers, later to become IGA, where Subway and Fagans Flooring now stand. "The policeman's daughter did the office work, and she was running a betting book at the same time." Robin didn't enjoy delivering groceries on his bike, but he learned to bone out the bacon.

At 18, he was called up for military service at Papakura Camp, where his bacon boning skills were much admired on cookhouse duty. Back home in the Bay, he worked painting houses with Ray Bruce, and fishing on Ray Bronlund's boat. "It wasn't a fishing boat. It was built to carry cream from the farms on the rivers and canals of the Hauraki Plains."

Robin then worked with Howard Pascoe, the boat builder with a boatshed on the beach at the end of Dundas Street.

It was through the Pascoe family that Robin met his wife, Gladys Buckton. Gladys was a churchgoer, and they attended together. By this time Robin had "saved a few bob and bought a boat." It was a mullet boat, hard to handle with its big sail. "We had good times up and down the coast in that boat, and Gladys was the best crew. She did what she was told."

In 1962 Robin and Gladys were married in the church by Rev McCullum. Robin sold the boat and bought a section in White Street. Then Robin set to, building a home.

"A job came up at the Mercury Bay Dairy Company, just two days a week working in the hardware store, selling farming supplies. I got the job, and that gave me time to build the house." The job soon became three days a week, then full-time. But the house got built.

Robin and Gladys had three sons, first Jonathan, then Christopher, then Michael. Robin had no experience with office work, but in his job as store keeper he soon became the de-facto manager. "Managers came and went, but none of them were any good, and I was always left with it. Over the time I worked there, the company was bought and sold four times – and me with it!"

Robin worked at the Dairy Company store for the rest of his working life. He saw many people come and go, including a young lady called Annie Lynch, well known to us all. Our friend Annie had already been off on her big OE and had returned home. She then left the job and went to Auckland, but she came back to the Dairy Company again, and Robin was still there. He

says Annie was a good employee. She says he was a pretty good Boss, too. Over the years Robin built a couple of strip-planked trailer-sailors, and his son Mike got into sailing with him around the Bay.

In 1986 Robin took redundancy and was finally able to buy a piece of land. “I always wanted to buy land and live on it, but my father was always against it. Now I could do it, I bought the land at Mill Creek. Then one day I came home and Gladys announced, ‘I bought a house today!’”

Gladys had bought an old house on Whitianga’s main street.

“It was very close to Christmas, and we had three weeks to get it shifted from town to Mill Creek. They had to cut it in half to move it. It took me about two years to patch it back together. Then we moved out of town and sold the house in White Street. We were rich!”

Gladys died in 2015 and Robin now lives alone with his flock of chooks (“too many roosters!”) and grows his own vegetables. He has very good neighbours living close by.

With the Lee family roots so entrenched in the area, Robin is very clued up on local history, but that is only one of his interests. Last year Robin spoke at the Historical Society on the subject of ‘Ship Wrecks Around the Coromandel’. He reads widely and has a formidable memory, but it takes a lot to get him to speak publicly. Robin has spent many hours hiking through the bush and has a wide knowledge of local flora and fauna, but his hiking had to stop last year when he developed heart problems. “Suddenly the hills have got steeper,” Robin says. These days he enjoys a soak at The Lost Spring.

During his lifetime Robin has seen many Ministers come and go at church, “some good, some not so good.” Robin is in church every Sunday. Now, as a ‘Local Ministry Team’ with no ordained Minister, Robin is enjoying the variety of preaching styles and the friendly Fellowship.

“I enjoy most of the preachers, and we have some good discussions over morning tea. They’re good people here.”

Thank you and bless you Robin!

A warm Welcome to our New Members

Over the last couple of months we have been delighted to welcome several new Fellowship members.

First to come was **Lynn Adam**. Lynn has lived in Whitianga for some time. Shortly after attending church Lynn volunteered to help on the Opshop counter on Wednesdays.

Then came **Stephen and Martha Williams**, who are in the process of moving permanently to Whitianga, once their business is sold. They are in church every Sunday, but commute back to Auckland on Mondays.

Next we welcomed **Sandra Stretton**, who also happens to be Charlotte Christensen's Mum. Sandra and her husband moved to Whitianga some time ago. She has also offered to help at the Opshop, and enjoys sorting children's toys.

On behalf of the St Andrew's Fellowship – Welcome to you all.



Opshop Report

Madeline has been delighted to welcome Lynn and Sandra to the Opshop staff. Our staff numbers have dropped recently, due to illness and extended overseas trips, and with Kathy away in Australia for several months we are looking for a **reliable person to sort and price children's clothes**. This could be just a few hours on any day of the week. If you can personally recommend someone, please call Madeline 021 1154 767 or call in to the shop.

Fellowship Link Report

When the Fellowship Link team got together to allocate new members to the Pastoral list, the meeting morphed into a brainstorming of how, as a Fellowship we might reach out to the community more effectively. We will work to implement some ideas, including an 'old time' Harvest Festival in February, with 'retro' activities, such as plaited loaves and floral displays. Where two or three are gathered together in the Lord's Name – the inspirations flow!

In Memoriam

April 23rd

Funeral service for Rev Stanley James Stewart

- Rev Pauline Stewart officiating.

April 28th

Memorial Service for Dorothy Isabel Jane Chaffin

- Rev John Twemlow officiating

May 4th

Funeral service for Esther Jasmine Duncan

Tim Cosson officiating.



Please remember all these dear friends and families in your prayers.

Church Property

The permanent shade cover is now installed on the church side deck.

It is bolted to the deck and has adjustable, weatherproof louvres.

By providing shade it will make the deck more usable for events and outdoor activities. The structure cost \$4,242 and it arrived in kitset form. ***Grateful thanks to the construction gang – Peter, Kevin, Vance and John.***

A new commercial gas stove to replace the old one, has been kindly donated to the Manawa Kai meals mission, and is now installed in St Andrew's kitchen.

It has taken two years to find a joiner who will take on the removal of dry **rot** from **one of the church window frames**. We are hopeful that we have now found the right person for the job. Watch this space!

The carpet in the church lounge and Hamilton Room has been cleaned.

Cost was \$670.00. A team of willing helpers turned out to remove all the furniture and sort chairs for cleaning, and then put it all back again for Sunday morning. ***Thank you Team!***

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**

Message from NZ Bible Society



Kia ora Mission Partners,

We're excited to share two important reports that offer fresh insight into Bible engagement, both globally and here in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey

This global study, led by the British and Foreign Bible Society and Gallup, was made possible thanks to support from many Bible Societies, including ours. It examines how different cultures view the Bible.

One section, Cluster 5, reflects our situation here in New Zealand:

A highly developed, formerly Christian country where fewer people engage with Scripture, and Christian identity is in decline. While many still identify as Christian, lots of people feel the Bible is irrelevant to their personal lives or society. This backs up what we've found in Bible Society New Zealand's last research released in 2024, giving us a clearer picture of both the challenges and the opportunities as we share God's Word.

The Quiet Revival

This encouraging report from BFBS focuses on growth in the Church, especially among Gen Z men. Similar trends are being seen by the American Bible Society. It's a great reminder that God is still moving, even in unexpected places.

Download the reports here:

- [Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey](#)
- [The Quiet Revival](#)
- [Bible Society NZ Research](#)

Thanks for standing with us in this important mission, which has Christ at the centre. Ngā mihi nui, ***Neels Janse van Rensburg CEO.***

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At St Andrew's we are pleased to see how quickly each new edition of 'Word for Today' is snapped up, and how often people discuss the day's Word among themselves. There are separate editions for adults and teens. The church copies are free. You can also receive 'Word for Today' online or mailed to you.

Worship at St Andrew's

10.00 am every Sunday. Communion service first Sunday each month

June 1st Dorothy Preece (Communion)

8th Julie & Bible team

15th Dorothy Preece

22nd Kevin Pringle

29th Rev David Rolinson

July 6th Rev David Rolinson (Communion)

13th Dorothy Preece

20th Margaret Birtles

27th Ross McCook



Looking Ahead – Holiness Retreat

Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby will lead two services on **November 2nd and 9th**.

During that week Shirley has offered to **lead a Holiness Retreat**.

This will be a time of listening to God in quietness - a rare opportunity for us each to explore personal holiness, as we seek the Lord together.

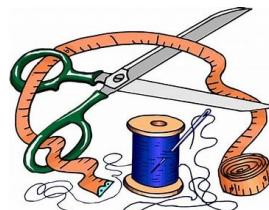
Shirley has provided a list of suggested topics, and these choices are being circulated in hard copy or by email. Please respond as soon as you can.

'Made by Hand' Craft Weekend

Friday 18th July - Sunday 20th July

Individuals and groups need to book their table space soon. Please spread the word to everyone who would like to display and encourage their craft groups and individuals - artists, craftsmen, carvers, potters,

sewers, knitters, spinners and weavers, embroiderers, candle, soap and jewellery makers, charity groups.....



No charge – koha welcome.

Call Annie 07 866 3711 or 027 322 3332

Or Email: standrewswhitianga@gmail.com

Parish and Community Information

Monday

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

Manawa Kai Heart Food Kitchen community meals
takeaway only, every Monday 2:30-5pm.
(Tuesdays on Bank Hols) Contact Maureen 027 2466 164

Tuesday

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

Stitch 'n' Chat fortnightly 1:30-4pm in the Hamilton Room. Includes afternoon tea. Contact Julie 021 169 1637

Enliven Presbyterian Aged Support 11-3 pm
Lunch provided. Contact Wendy 021 2296 324

Wednesday

Scrapbags quilting group 10am-3pm weekly
BYO lunch. Contact Wilma 027 253 5589

Parkinsons Support 6-weekly. 11am-2pm
For dates Erwin 07 866 5665

Friday

Cancer Support Coffee Morning
First Friday of each month. Contact Ruth 021 363 840

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

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