

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH
St Andrew's by the Sea Community Church
Newsletter April – May 2026

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

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Our People and their Stories –

John and Amanda Gois

We met John and Amanda when they came to church a few weeks ago, having purchased at Marina Apartments, right next door. Their home is San Diego, and they plan to be here for a few months of each year. They both have American accents, but Amanda was born and grew up in Hastings, with a brother and a sister.



They were not well off. Her father worked as a grocery assistant, with multiple jobs after hours, fruit and vegetable picking to help make ends meet. They went as a family to St Matthews Anglican Church in Hastings. "My Grandma Elsie was very active in the church and the Opshop," Amanda says. "I loved going to Sunday School and hearing all the stories. My parents divorced when I was seven, and Sunday School was my happy place." Her Mum moved around a bit with the girls, and Amanda attended several schools. At age 14 she went back to Hastings to live with Dad. She went to Hastings Girls' High, and she was Confirmed at St Matthew's Church.

On leaving school Amanda got a job with an architect. In the early days of computers Amanda found she had an understanding of design programming when few others did. She became very adept, and she went to work for a marketing company who later transferred her to their

Wellington office, advising clients on marketing strategy. With a friend, at age 27 Amanda went to San Diego expecting to be away for about six months. Her Job was kept open for her, but romance intervened. Amanda married Jerry and stayed in San Diego. They had two daughters, Madison and Rachel. Amanda wanted to come back to NZ to live, and that became a problem for them both. The couple divorced after 14 years.

Amanda worked with St Paul's Senior Services in San Diego. She had drifted away from her faith, but in this job she found herself tugged back to the Lord. She began driving an elderly lady to church, and eventually stayed for the services. "It was like coming home".

John was born in San Diego. He says it is unusual for people to stay there all their lives, but he did. His grandmother was staunchly Catholic and John went through to his first Communion at age 13. "None of it meant anything to me. The best thing was getting \$300 in Communion gifts." John stopped attending church as soon as he could. His father was a fisherman, away weeks and months at a time, purse-seining for tuna in the deep oceans. "I went out fishing with my father a couple of times when I was young and I always wanted to follow him onto the boats." John left school at 17 and began work on his father's boats, as far afield as Panama.

At 23 John married his first wife. They had a daughter, Heather. When he was 27 John was invited to the Horizon Christian Fellowship. "There was an altar call and I felt an irresistible pull - as if the Father was saying, "Come on John, where have you been?" John had felt the Spirit nudging him for a long time, but he had managed to ignore it. He got involved with the church music group, mostly playing keyboard. They led the music on Sundays and also played at other events. "We wrote songs that were not exactly Christian, but definitely Spiritual, and the people loved them."

John's marriage faltered after 25 years, and his faith faltered too. "Church and faith had become an inconvenience in my life."

John's father retired from actively fishing, staying ashore to manage the boats and build up the business, selling purse-seining gear of his own design. John also stayed ashore and joined him in the business.

Amanda and John met on a dating app. Faith was one of the things they both listed as important. After emailing each other for weeks, they eventually met for coffee and talked for three hours. "We both knew it was right." John and Amanda were married in San Diego and together they now attend The Rock in San Diego, a very large church organisation with five campuses.

"Hundreds attend the Sunday services, but there are many smaller fellowship groups (up to 50 people) and we really enjoy those." With her experience of elderly care, Amanda was able to look after John's mother before she died in 2024. John's father died in 2022. Their two melded families get on really well together and often meet for the holiday celebrations.

Amanda and John are often back in NZ, visiting Amanda's family. She has two sisters in Mamaku, near Rotorua, "and many cousins scattered all around the North Island." Amanda has recently retired from her work with St Paul's Senior Services, a position she held for more than 16 years and which she really loved. Now they have more time for travelling, John and Amanda have been looking for a place to call their own when they visit, and a year ago they bought at Marina Apartments.

"We planned to have a look at a few churches around here before deciding on one," John says. "St Andrew's was the nearest, so it was the first we tried, and we stayed. We haven't looked anywhere else. This small congregation (30 or so) is very different from The Rock in San Diego. It feels more like one of our fellowship groups in San Diego, and we have felt very welcome – and by the way, we love the lolly jar."

*Thank you, John and Amanda for sharing your story.
We look forward to your return.*

The Power Pole

The Combined Churches service was held at the Elim Church on March 29th. The programme included a 'sharing time' when people were asked to tell their stories. One woman told us how her neighbour had alerted her to a shadow that fell on her house after sunrise every morning. The shadow was in the shape of a cross, and she would never have seen it if her neighbour had not told her about it.



"I felt very blessed to know that the shadow of the cross falls on my house every morning," she said. That shadow is created by a near-by power pole, and it set me thinking. Surely the cross of Jesus was the world's first ever Power pole! Pastor Nathan gave a Palm Sunday message about God's Power in our lives – something we must never underestimate or take for granted. May you know the Power and Blessing of Easter in your life every day, as certain as the sunrise!

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Charlotte's Blog – Updated 31st March – Good News! Thanks be to God!

"The scan shows absolutely no growth in my organs, so that's wonderful news. The oncologist is going to get back to us after Easter with next steps but it's likely to be another scan in about 6 weeks. Close monitoring is the plan here. To finish the day we've arrived home to a house without power.

Seems it's a local fault, and it's being worked on, so glad it isn't already dark. We're off to locate the candles and torches in case it persists longer than expected. Overall, though, a good day.

Please continue to pray for Charlotte and the family.

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If you would like to Donate -

To the Church and Parish: BNZ Whitianga – 02 0496 0062562 00

Or to Manawa Kai Meals: Westpac Whitianga - 03 1578 0108901

The Church Opshop – a history to be proud of!

St Andrew's Opshop began in the 1982 when the Parish was separated from Coromandel, and the first Minister was appointed to live in Whitianga.

(Previously the Minister was housed in Coromandel.) The church purchased a house (the Manse) in Catherine Crescent and Rev. Stewart and Maime McKenzie were the first occupants.

The Presbyterian Women's Fellowship (PWF) began raising money to pay off the mortgage, and the town's first Opshop was born.

It began in a little tin shed behind the church (there was no church hall in those days). The idea caught on, and business boomed. Those ladies paid off the Manse mortgage in ten years! St Andrew's then began to receive more money each month from the shop.

When the ladies ran out of steam and the PWF eventually folded, volunteers from other churches came to help. From that time, the Opshop began to make regular monthly donations to the other churches, and to Whitianga Volunteer Fire Brigade. In total, the Opshop now donates \$3,100 in regular donations each month.

The benefits to the community are ongoing. We are always open to applications from community groups who need funding for their special projects or equipment. **In March the Opshop donated \$5,000 to the Mercury Bay Day Camp, and \$1,180 to the Whitianga Skate School.**

Our team of volunteer helpers fluctuates as circumstances change. People move away or have other commitments, and others come to join the team. We have recently welcomed back Helen Scott and Nicola Hewlett, who have both been volunteers in the past. Madeline would love to hear from anyone who would like to join the Opshop volunteers team. The hours are entirely flexible!



Worship at St Andrew's by the Sea

10:00 am every Sunday. Communion first Sunday each month. Families with children are welcome. The family pews at the rear of the church have soft toys and Bible-based activities.

Friday 3rd April Good Friday service
led by Kevin Pringle

Sunday April 5th Easter Communion
led by Dorothy Preece

April 12th John and Robin Twemlow
19 Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby
26 Ngaire Sothern

(Methodist Lay Preacher's Association)

May 3rd Dorothy Preece Communion
10 Julie St George and Bible Team
17 John Ormsby
24 John and Robin Twemlow
31 Dorothy Preece

Also Combined Churches Service 5:30 at St Patrick's Catholic Church

Property sub-committee update:

We are deeply grateful for all the work this team is doing – taking on everything from building flower planters to water blasting and drainage. In Peter Finlayson's log, the list of 'jobs to be done' is growing ever longer. John Pedersen was tasked with listing things needing attention at the manse, which houses a young family. That proved to be a daunting list to bring the house up to standard. As a start, at our last Parish Council meeting we agreed to replace the stove, and a new one has been ordered. A new wood-burner has also been installed.

Also Debbie has put a lot of work into getting us up to speed with Fire Safety. Debbie is working with all the groups who use the church hall, to advise them about fire evacuation procedures. Spoiler alert – there will have to be a fire drill for the Sunday congregation sometime soon!



Looking Back – This first appeared in the Easter 2023 Newsletter.

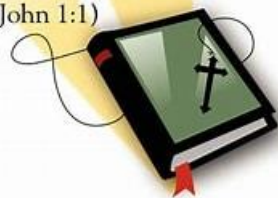
Rev Shirley gave us some examples of **'The Bible in 50 Words'**

Shirley asked us to think how we might write it. We came back with our answers the following week.

Dorothy wrote the version below, and was asked to print it:

God created, Universe waited.
People sinning – evil winning?
Prophets learning, people yearning.
Angel saying, Mary praying.
Jesus born, brand new dawn.
Jesus loving, people shoving.
Donkey riding, leaders chiding.
Jesus praying, His Father obeying.
Work is done, victory won!
Love endured, promise secured.
Spirit alive! People can thrive!

"In the Beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God."
(John 1:1)



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The Gardener's Hymn

(The Community Choir has this. Dorothy has the full version.)

*All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful – the Lord God made them all.*

*The greenfly on the roses, the clubroot on the greens,
The slugs that eat the lettuce and chew the aubergines.*

*The drought that kills the fuchsias, the frost that nips the buds,
The rain that drowns the seedlings, the blight that hits the spuds.*

*But still we gardeners labour midst vegetables and flowers,
And pray what hits the neighbours may somehow bypass ours.*

**Look up Matt 13: 24-30 -
The wheat and the weeds.**

Community Activities - St Andrew's Church Hall

Monday – Upright & Active exercise for seniors 9 am weekly.

Contact Wendy 028 411 3004 or Kathy 021 254 2769

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

Tuesday – Upright & Active exercise for seniors 9am weekly

Contact Wendy 028 411 3004 or Kathy 021 254 2769

- **Enliven Presbyterian Aged Support** 11-3 pm. Lunch provided.
Contact Wendy 021 2296 324 for assessment
- **Stitch 'n' Chat** fortnightly 1:30- 4pm in the Hamilton Room.
Includes afternoon tea. Contact Julie 021 169 1637

Wednesday – Scrapbags quilting group 10am-3pm weekly BYO lunch.

Contact Wilma 027 253 5589

- **Parkinsons Support** 6-weekly. 11am-2pm.

For dates contact Erwin 07 866 5665

Thursday - Enliven Presbyterian Aged Support 11-3 pm.

Contact Wendy 021 2296 324

Friday - Cancer Support Coffee Morning First Friday of each month.

Contact Lareece 027 880 5644 or Di 027 252 7996

- **Blind / Low Vision group** 10am-12 on **2nd Friday** of each month.
Contact Jackie 07 866 5054

The Church Op Shop

Open 9:30am to 1pm Wednesday to Saturday.

Volunteers welcome

Contact Madeline 021 169 1637

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St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church

Corner Albert and Owen Streets, Whitianga | PO Box 368, Whitianga

www.standrewsbythesea.org.nz | standrewswhitianga@gmail.com

Facebook: St Andrews Community Church Mercury Bay NZ

Parish Chairman: Kevin Pringle

Secretary /Worship Team Leader: Dorothy Preece 022 132 2061