

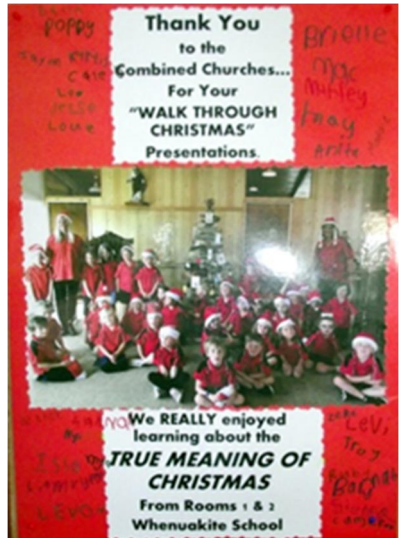
MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's Community Church Newsletter Newsletter December 2019-January 2020

Our mission in this fellowship is to share the Love of God with everyone, and lovingly encourage them to follow Jesus Christ

Our faith stories: walk through Christmas 2019

Many of you will be familiar with the Mercury Bay phenomenon that is known as 'Walk Through Christmas'. It started in 2002 when Rev Stan Stewart came up with the idea of bringing primary school children round the various churches in Whitianga, to experience different presentations of the Christmas story from a Christian perspective. From the beginning, three churches have taken part; St Peter's Anglican, St Patrick's Catholic and here at St Andrew's. For the past several years the presenters have been Rev Gillian Reid at St Peter's, Lillian Munn at St Patrick's, and Dorothy Preece at St Andrew's (with Julie St George doing most of the work with pictures on the screen.)



Most of the children attend Walk Through for three consecutive years, as they progress through primary school. This means the presentations have to be different every year. Last year at St Andrew's we talked about the advent candles, hope, joy, peace and love, and finally the Christ candle. They all represent the gifts that God gave to the world when Jesus was born. This year we talked about the names for the Messiah, as written in Isaiah's prophecy, and we emphasised the name 'Prince of Peace'. We linked that prophesy with the song that the angels sang, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth to all people who love God'. Jesus came to show us how to have peace in our hearts, and how to be peacemakers – be kind, be fair, look out for those who have no friends, and try to remember

that you can take everything to Jesus, 'your best-ever friend'. Usually the Walk Through happens on the first Monday in December, and so it was this year for Mercury Bay and Te Rerenga Schools – but this year we repeated the programme on Tuesday as well, at the request of Whenuakite School. You might recognise the picture at the top of this story. It's the poster in St Andrew's hall, sent to us from the Whenuakite class after they came through last year. It reads, "Thank you - we really enjoyed learning about the true meaning of Christmas." We were delighted this year, when Whenuakite School sent more classes, 67 children, to the Walk Through.

A great deal of behind-the-scenes preparation goes on before-hand, not just in preparing the talks and activities. Every year Madeleine and John set up a lovely Christmas tree and nativity to set the scene for the children. St Andrew's is the last stop, and as they leave the church the class leaders are given a class set of envelopes, one for each child to take home. These include activities from each of the three churches; colouring pictures, bookmarks, word puzzles and the like. This year St Andrew's gave them the makings for a peace dove to hang on the Christmas tree. Also included in the envelopes are children's Bible Society leaflets, and information about all the Christmas services and activities in Whitianga. Printing all the material and stuffing the envelopes for 250 children is a marathon job! Combined Churches Committee pays for the envelopes and all the printing.

And then there are the biscuits! Before they leave St Andrew's a team of helpers is kept busy supplying 50 children in each group with juice and biscuits. The groups come through at half-hourly intervals, so the helpers are kept on their toes! Generous people from various churches supply the biscuits (Carol made reindeers with pretzels for antlers) and support us on the day.

A lot of prayer goes into this mission outreach. We try to make the programme interesting and entertaining, so that all of the children, their teachers, parents and helpers will go away with a message of Christmas that goes deeper than 'Happy Birthday Jesus!' Then we leave it in the hands of the Lord to work in the lives of all those who attend. Our grateful thanks go to all who helped with the Walk Through this year. ***Thank you all!***

Parish Council News

Two new Parish Councillors were elected at St Andrew's Annual Congregational Meeting on October 13th when Annie Lynch and Kevin Pringle graciously accepted nomination. The newly expanded team has some great ideas for the future of ministry and outreach at St Andrew's.

Discussions centred on the possibility of employing a parish lay worker. Not a minister (we can't afford one!), but someone who would work for a limited number of hours each week and undertake specific tasks, such as liaison with the Monday Meals families and exploring outreach opportunities. Council Chairman John Twemlow asked us all earnestly to ***pray for guidance, that the right person be found for this job of mission.***

At our first council meeting we also discussed the possibilities for upgrade of the unused area at the Albert Street frontage. There are tree roots that need to be removed before anything can be done, but should it be paved? Or concreted? Or should we expand the existing deck down to street level? All these are very expensive options, but maintaining a garden has proved to be unmanageable. It was suggested that this area could form an entrance to the side door of the Hamilton Room, and perhaps a café-style outreach could be tried. We are aware that this work would require someone with drive and energy to undertake it. ***So please keep praying, and we will let the Lord lead us.***

Your Elected Parish Councillors are :

John Twemlow - Chairman,

Barbara Blake

Diana Campbell-Barnaby

Charlotte Christensen

Annie Lynch

Elizabeth Nicholls

Dorothy Preece

Kevin Pringle

Julie St George

Also attached to the team:

Raewyn Ceruti – Pastoral Care,

Angela Taylor – Treasurer.

Madeleine Saunders – Op shop manager



The Christmas House

On the Beach, 66 Simpsons Beach, Whitianga

If you have not yet visited the Christmas House, make this the year that you do. Gordon and Diana Barnaby have once again decked out their house to fascinate and amaze young and old - everyone is young at heart at the Christmas House. Every year, Santa and Mrs Christmas, (with the help of Madeleine, Santa's elf) erect a stunning avenue of Christmas trees, decorated to perfection. These lead into Santa's grotto and his throne, with the spectacular beach as the backdrop. At the front of the house is the toy store, with every musical toy imaginable on show. It is a collection accumulated over many years, reflecting a passion that Gordon and Diana share, not just for all things Christmassy, but for generosity to the community. A wishing well collects donations, not towards all their work and effort, or their electricity bill, but for the Mercury Bay Day Camp, amounting to a substantial donation each year. Santa is in residence from 7:30 to 9:30 every evening, from December 15th up to Christmas Eve.



Your whole family is invited to Christmas Dinner in the Whitianga Town Hall on Christmas Day. The meal is free, by donation from the business community and others. The aim is to create a real family Christmas for those who find themselves disconnected for most of the year. Therefore it needs to involve everyone, so that we can share a real sense of community. Doors open at 11 am. Do come, and bring your visitors!

God is Human...

a reflection by John Twemlow

At this time of the year the Church Calendar tells us that about 2000 years ago “God came to this earth as flesh.” While our mind might do gymnastics trying to figure this out, I believe it’s important for us to understand that our creator is one like us.

One of the worst concepts some people have is that they think Jesus wasn’t really human at all, just something like a superman who did good things to sort out problems. Let me assure you God was indeed very human. Jesus (The Word) was conceived in a human womb, he experienced human aging, he had human needs, he experienced human emotions, he learned like any human, he died as a human, he was resurrected in a human body.

Now, why is it important that we know this?

First we need to understand that it is only through the man Jesus that we can fully know what God is like. Look at Jesus’ life, what he said and what he did; there we see God. Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus is the EXACT representation of his father. You can’t get a clearer picture than that.

Second, Jesus, as a human showed us that we now only know God through RELATIONSHIP, and not by obeying laws and regulations. The Triune God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit reveals to us a relationship that draws us into a family of love, compassion and beauty.

And finally by allowing sinful humanity to nail him to a cross, Jesus, through his death, burial and resurrection, would defeat Satan.

1 John 3:8 says, “Jesus’ mission was to defeat (undo) the works of the devil.” Our authentic life in God comes because he humanly did what we cannot do.

C. S. Lewis said it well with these words: “The Son of God became a man, that men might become sons of God.” That is what Christmas is all about.



Who is Jesus? The Biblical Evidence

The traditional Christmas readings are so familiar to us, we almost know them by heart – but have you actually read them in your Bibles lately? Let's start with Isaiah's prophecy, written probably a thousand years before Jesus was born: Isaiah 9, from the old King James Version:

'.....For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.'
This is God, speaking through Isaiah, telling us who Jesus really was.

Then, when the angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds: Luke 2, verse 10, "...Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord..." *Not just a baby, but a Saviour!*

When Jesus was ready to begin His ministry, he was baptised by John the Baptist: Mark 1, verse 7, '....And straightway, coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending on Him, and there came a voice from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".....'

God, acknowledging the Son He sent.

In Luke Chapter 4 we read how in his home town, Nazareth, Jesus preached from the prophecy of Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted.....' and verse 21: "This day, this scripture is fulfilled in your ears..."

Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the promised Messiah!

If you don't have a Bible at home, just ask at church and we'll find one for you. God bless you as you study God's Word.

FOR
GOD
SO
LOVED THE WORLD
HE
GAVE
HIS
ONLY
SON

Funerals at St Andrew's

Rev John Twemlow officiating

5 November - Dorothy Heather Stevenson

20 November - Jeanette Davina Watson



Our sympathy, thoughts and prayers go out to these families

Worship @ St Andrew's - Sunday 9:30am

Families with young children are welcomed. We provide an area with quiet toys and Bible related activities where children and parents can sit together

Worship schedule for Christmas/New Year and beyond

Dec 8th - Kevin Pringle

15th - Ladies' Bible Study Group

20th - Whitianga Christmas Carols at Soldier's Memorial Park, 7pm

22nd - Rev John Twemlow

***24th - Christmas Eve: Kuaotunu Community Carols,
Kuaotunu Hall at 7:30pm, John & Robin Twemlow***

***25th - Christmas Day Family Service at St Andrew's, at 9:30
Dorothy Preece***

29th - Robin Twemlow

Jan 5th - Communion - Rev Viv Coleman

12th - Dorothy Preece

19th - Rev John Twemlow

26th - Rev Viv Coleman



***A blessed, peaceful Christmas and a happy new year to you all,
from St Andrew's Church Fellowship***

Financial Matters

For donations to the Church and Parish:

Mercury Bay Co-operating Parish

BNZ Whitianga

020 496 0062562 00



For donations to the Monday Meals:

Mercury Bay Community Support Trust

Westpac Whitianga

03 1578 0108901 00



Real Joy

What is Christmas without Jesus Christ?

It's a holiday full of stuff.

Money and stress, teaching kids greed--

Some people are saying 'Enough!'

'Love one another' our Saviour said

It's all about love, not things.

Let's teach our children to serve, and create

The real joy that Christmas brings.



Notices



The Church Op-Shop will be **closed** on Christmas Day (and Boxing Day (Dec 26th).

Also **closed** on January 1st and 2nd, reopening on Friday 3rd.

Our normal trading days are five days in the week:

Tuesday – Saturday, 8:30 to 12:30

Please support St Andrew's Op-shop – helping to keep the church doors open.

Community groups regularly meeting in St Andrew's Hall will be **closed** during January, and will resume in February.

For further information, contact Dorothy Preece 866 5452.

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church

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