

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's Community Church Newsletter

December 2020 - January 2021

Our Mission: To demonstrate the Love of God to all people, and by our daily living to encourage every person to follow Jesus.

A Christmas Message from Rev John Twemlow



We can't leave this year without mentioning COVID-19.

It has been one 'helluva' year.

As we consider certain aspects of the Corona Virus, it occurs to me that there is an amazing parallel with our Christian Gospel. Keep in mind that the word GOSPEL literally means 'Good News', and it is GOOD NEWS I want to emphasise here.

Firstly what is this VIRUS?

It is an infectious agent; it's too small to be seen by the naked eye and it is able to multiply within the cells of the host.

So when we apply that thought to our own sinful nature, we know SIN infects our personal lives. In many cases it is not even recognised by ourselves or others and for many people it multiplies within their own lives.

Secondly, where did this VIRUS come from?

It is generally agreed, though not confirmed it originally came from live animals within a market in Wuhan, China. As for our SIN nature, quite clearly it was passed on from our human forefathers, in particular, Adam. And I think the origin of SIN has been confirmed!!

Thirdly, how can this CORONA VIRUS be dealt with?

Immunisation is the answer. By injection into each individual. Scientists around the world are in their laboratories right at this moment, working on a vaccine that will stop COVID-19 right where it is now.

So how is our SIN NATURE dealt with?

At the very beginning of time God had a plan, and we read about it in the very last book of the Bible. In Revelation 13 we read about 'the Lamb's Book of Life' and it goes on to say, "the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world". This clearly indicates that a decision was made from the beginning of time, to deal with the VIRUS OF SIN !!

As time went on, God revealed to humanity His love and patience.

Finally, at the appointed time, the Son of Man, Jesus was slain as a lamb on the cross on Calvary's hill. All human kind had a hand in this. Not just the Jews, or the Romans, but in essence all of humanity, which of course includes you and me.

As He hung upon that cross, Jesus called out to His Father:

"Forgive them, Father, for they have no idea what they're doing."

At that instant ALL OF HUMANITY was forgiven! We were INJECTED with the Grace and Love of God. Our sin was dealt a death blow and while all of us still continue to commit sin, there is no longer any penalty that comes as a result of our sin: **"For as in Adam all die, so now in Christ shall all be made ALIVE."**

**This is the Gospel! This is the Good News!
You have been made ALIVE because the
VIRUS of SIN has been dealt with, ONCE AND
FOR ALL PEOPLE.**

MAY GOD BLESS YOU THIS CHRISTMAS.

FOR
GOD
SO
LOVED THE WORLD
HE
GAVE
HIS
ONLY
SON

Remembered at Christmas

St Peter's Anglican Church - Tuesday, December 22nd @ 7:00 pm

A reflective service for those who have lost loved ones, or are separated from them at Christmas.

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

December 13 - Kevin Pringle

20 - Rev John Twemlow - Carol Service

And a repeat of the 'Walk Through' Nativity Play.

Christmas Day - 9:30 family service - Dorothy Preece

27 - Dorothy Preece

January 3 - Rev Viv Coleman - Communion

10 - Peter and Dorothy Chaffin

17 - Kevin Pringle

24 - Dorothy Preece



St Andrew's Fellowship: One Body – Many Parts

Our Church Leaders feel there is a wealth of experience and skills within the Fellowship that is not yet recognised. Some people may like to be more involved, so a few weeks ago we produced printed forms inviting people to come forward and tell us how they would like to help. This resulted in several people saying they were willing to take a more active role in Sunday worship, pastoral care and kitchen duties, and we discovered Jan Bates, a musician who has had a wealth of experience providing piano and organ music in churches. Jan has already played for our service, and will accompany us on Christmas Day.

Thank you Jan - and welcome to the music team!

The 'One Body – Many Parts' form is still available in the church hall, and we encourage everyone to consider using their particular talents in the life of St Andrew's Fellowship.

Community Christmas Day Lunch 2020

@ Crossroad Church (opposite New World)

The two previous Christmas Lunch events were held in the Whitianga Hall, with the meal cooked at St Andrew's kitchen and food transported to the hall – a lot of work and a logistical nightmare! This year Crossroad Church has kindly offered to host the lunch.



It will be so much easier! They too, have a commercial kitchen, but also a large auditorium and sound system, with seating for a big crowd. *So all we need now is the big crowd!* Numbers are capped at 180. There is no charge. Funding is by generous donations from Mercury Bay businesses and individuals.

So please come along and support us if you can – doors open at 11:00 with carols. Lunch at 12:00. Bring friends and neighbours and make it a party to remember. Make sure no-one is left out. Help us to demonstrate the generosity of God's Christmas Gift of Love. Transport will be arranged for those who are mobility impaired.

Please ring Maureen Kerr 027 246 6164 to book lunch or transport.

Monday meals update

About 40 boxed, frozen meals are currently being distributed on Mondays to needy families and individuals. People wishing to receive the meals should go to St Andrew's hall on Mondays between 3 and 5 pm. Meals will continue to be provided every Monday throughout the holiday period.

Meals co-ordinator Maureen Kerr says they continue to receive very generous donations of foods such as fresh veges and smoked fish. Also in this festive season they have been receiving very special 'leftovers' from catered Christmas parties. These need to be eaten fresh, and it falls to the Trust members to distribute them where they know there is need.

Maureen says the meals programme will be reassessed in the New Year.



Operation Christmas Child

At the end of October we packed 'Operation Christmas Child' gift boxes for the charity *Samaritans Purse*. This year the boxes have gone to children in remote villages in Fiji, Cambodia, Malawi and Madagascar. For weeks beforehand, people were shopping and gathering suitable items to pack. This



year St Andrew's sent 40 boxes. Packing the boxes for remote areas is an interesting exercise. Many village families are at subsistence level. The children have very little in the way of toys - but what to send? Not plastic toys that will quickly break and end up on the rubbish pile, or worse still, in the sea. It's a balancing act. We packed basic toiletry items, clothing, colouring books and pencils, balls, masks, hats and sunglasses, cuddly toys etc. Our enterprising seamstress, Barbara made fabric bags for the children to keep their treasures safe. This COVID year has thrown us all back to reflect on the basics of life – and to think again about our insatiable consumerism. It has been brought home to us that *people matter* more than money. We missed our families and friends, (and our Church fellowship) far more than we missed the shops. Some of the messaging from the churches and from TV adverts is urging us to think about giving time and attention to others this Christmas, not just 'stuff' that people don't really need.

Christian World Service Appeal envelopes are now being distributed from Church. These can be mailed individually, or placed in the offertory, or in our donations boxes. Donations can also be made to the Parish bank account (see overleaf.) This year the CWS Appeal is for Lebanon after the tragic Beirut port explosion, and for refugee camps throughout the region. CWS goes wherever the need is greatest, to feed the hungry, provide fresh water and support struggling third world communities.

Our Faith Stories: Walk-Through Christmas

Every year three churches in Whitianga host primary age children from schools all around Mercury Bay. The tradition started with Rev Stan Stewart in 2000. St Peter's (Anglican), St Patrick's (Catholic), and St Andrew's present a different programme each year, telling the Christmas Story in various ways – drama, story-telling, singing. The school groups "Walk Through" Whitianga to each one in turn. This year on Monday Dec 7th, 117 children came through - two class groups from Mercury Bay Area School, followed by Te Rerenga country school. (There were fewer MBAS children this year. Due to a very disruptive learning year, the beginners' class did not come. They will be back next year.) Next day 60 children from Whenuakite country school came through. Each year as they leave, they take away an envelope for each child in the class, with Christmas activities to take home, including a programme of Christmas services and events from all the churches in Whitianga. Lilian Munn (St Patrick's) and Dorothy Preece (St Andrew's) have developed a very efficient way of stuffing those envelopes! This year at St Andrew's our Ladies' Bible Group coerced husbands and brothers to join them in presenting a nativity drama which Julie found. The Bible story came alive, as 'Old Star' (Annie) told 'New Star' (Elizabeth), about the exciting events when Jesus was born. The costumes were brilliant - was that a mixing bowl that Mary (Nicole) had under her gown? We hope the team will be able to perform it again for the congregation, on Sunday December 20th.



St Andrew's, being the last on the Walk-Through, provides drinks and cookies before the children go back to school. In line with the theme, the call went out for 'star shaped cookies' which came in by the bucket-load, the children leaving with happy Christmas tummies.

The Walk-Through event has become a tradition for the schools, as well as the churches. It is a lot of work for those involved, but it feels very worthwhile. The children are aged 5-8, so they come three successive years, accompanied by teachers, parents and young siblings. It is a faith mission, a cast-your-bread-upon-the-waters mission, and it happens with a lot of prayer.

Please help us to pray, and keep on praying for those children and families who came through this year, that the hope and peace, joy and love of the Christ Child will take root in their hearts and transform their lives this Christmas.

On The Internet: Primary school children were asked - What is Love?

(This has been circulating for a while, but still worth repeating):

Bobby, aged 7 is reported to have said: *"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas, when you stop opening your presents and just listen".*

Nikka, age 6: *"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with someone you hate."*

Billy, age 4: *"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."*

(Postscript) I am reminded of the Easter story, when Mary recognised the Lord because she heard Him speak her name. I praise God that Jesus speaks our names too, in that loving way – Dorothy.

Banking Information

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

Christmas Day Community Meal: MBCS Trust as above
(Please tag your donation 'Monday Meals' or 'Christmas Meal')

Parish and Community Information

AA Driver Licensing Dates

Friday January 8th and Friday February 12th

Community Groups:

Contact these numbers for New Year Opening Dates:

Monday	Upright & Active - For active Seniors	Carol 867 1097
Tuesday	Sit and be Fit – For the less energetic Stitch n’ Chat – Every second Tuesday	Viv 869 5295 Julie 022 035 7631
Wednesday	Ladies’ Bible Study At Julie’s home Scrapbags – Quilting group Parkinsons Support - 6 weekly	Julie 022 035 7631 Robin 866 5029 Raewyn 866 2609
Thursday	Enliven Caring for seniors	Jenny 866 0556
Friday	Cancer Support Monthly coffee morning	Penny 027 684 0004
Whenuakite Women’s Fellowship		Annie 866 3711

St Andrew’s service 9:30 every Sunday

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew’s By the Sea Community Church

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