

# MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

## St Andrew's Community Church Newsletter

**December 2020 - January 2021**

*Our Mission in this Parish is to demonstrate the Love of God to all people, and by our actions and words to encourage all to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

### ***Our People and their stories: Regina Sheik Mahmud***

Regina, known to us as Gina, was born in Nadi, Fiji, to a Fijian-Indian family. Her father, Sheik Mahmud was Moslem, and her mother, Rachel Singh was fourth generation Christian. Her Dad drove the local buses, and her Mum was a nurse. Gina was the eldest in a family of two boys and two girls. "It's a very large family with many cousins and uncles," Gina says.



"Mum's family were very strong in their faith and they didn't approve of her marriage to a Moslem man, but Dad was too busy working 7 days to actively follow his religion, and we always went to the Methodist Church where Mum was a Sunday School teacher. Eventually Dad was baptised as a Christian. The Methodist Superintendent Minister, Rev Lucas baptised him. It was my Mum who brought Dad to faith.

"My Dad was very strong on education for all of us, not just schools but work training as well. We went to Andrew's Primary School in Nadi and then us girls boarded at Jasper Williams Girls' High School in Lautoka. The principal was Miss Marjorie Hodge. Here at church we have the Kathleen Hodge Lounge. I wonder if she was related to my old school principal? "I really didn't know what I wanted to do when I left school," Gina says. "A beauty therapy school opened up a branch in Nadi, teaching people to work with tourists on the resort islands. Mother encouraged me to go there, just so I had something to do while I thought about my direction. It was an unusual choice for me, because I was really a tomboy, and I didn't expect it would be for ever, but to my surprise I really enjoyed the classes. "The school was very expensive, and it must have been a struggle for my parents. It was quite hard because we studied five days a week, and at the

weekends we went to the resorts for practical experience.

“I got my Diploma in Beauty and Massage Therapy. As soon as I qualified, the owner of the school offered me a job in her own business on Malolo Island. She was also partner in a company in the Cook Islands, and in 2003, after one year in Malolo I was offered a job in Rarotonga.

“I stayed in the Cook Islands for 9 years, working at Rarotonga Beach Resorts at Aroa Beach and in Aitutaki. I really liked living in Rarotonga. I wasn't homesick or lonely because I seem to make friends easily.

“When I first got there I was shocked by the cultural differences. In Fiji people are very strict but in Raro it was much more relaxed.

“When I was young I went away from the Church for a while, even though my mother was always reminding me about faith, but in Rarotonga I started to attend church with a Fijian fellowship 60-70 strong.

I enjoyed being in company with so many Fijians. At the end of the Sunday service they always opened the bar at the back of the building, and passed around the kava bowls enjoying a social time together.

“In Rarotonga I got to know a New Zealand lady named Megan. She owned a beauty spa in Pukekohe, and at that time she was advising Alan Hopping about setting up a beauty therapy spa at The Lost Spring. Megan invited me to come to New Zealand, but I didn't come straight away. In 2011 I came to have a holiday in New Zealand. I called The Lost Spring to speak to Megan, but she was no longer there. However, they offered me a job! I came in on a holiday visa, but I stayed on and applied for a work visa. I worked at The Lost Spring as a spa therapist.

“When I first arrived in Whitianga I lived at Turtle Cove in Bryce Street, just around the corner from St Andrew's Church. So I came to this church. It is a friendly church and everyone welcomed me. Mary Petersen was our Minister then. I remember everyone thought I must be feeling cold because I always dressed in light clothes for church, even in the winter. One man even gave me a blanket, but I wasn't cold. I don't feel the cold and I actually like the cold weather.”

“My brother Peter was already living in Pahiataua when I arrived. He followed me to Whitianga. Peter is the chef at the Game Fishing Club. Then my friend Susanna, who was at the beauty school with me in Nadi, also came to live in Whitianga with her family. They have 5 children. My sister Pauline lives in Auckland.”

While she was working at The Lost Spring Gina developed a serious problem. She suddenly lost sight in both eyes. "I was on my own at the time, and I walked by myself to the optician's. I was in hospital for 10 days." Since then Gina has had to undergo multiple medical procedures on her eyes, and for a time she lost all her hair. Gina had to take a lot of time off work and eventually she left her employment at The Lost Spring. She now works as a beauty therapist on her own, based at the chiropractor's rooms at 109 Albert Street. "It was Miss Kathleen Hodge's house. "I enjoy working for myself and I have enough clients to be able to manage," Gina says. "The doctors say this eye condition could deteriorate any time, so I need to work flexible hours and as stress-free as possible." Gina stays in close touch with her Mum in Fiji, though they are not allowed to visit each other due to Covid. A couple of years ago we at St Andrew's cleaned out the Sunday School cupboard and sent a lot of teaching materials to the Sunday School in Nadi. From time to time Gina makes up parcels to send to them. "In the past Mum helped in a Sunday School of 50 kids, but she is no longer a Sunday School teacher.

"I don't think I have a very strong faith, but my mother's faith is very strong and she is always encouraging me, praying for me, sending blessings to me. I have always wanted to read the whole Bible but I've never got very far. It's very hard to read. For a long time I have said my prayers at night, but just recently I have started to pray in the mornings as well. I try to just relax and give everything to God.

"I think my faith is growing. I know we should rely on God but I think we are supposed to do our best to help ourselves, not sit around waiting for God to provide. So I will keep on working as long as I am well enough."

*Gina, thank you for sharing your story with us. Thank you too, for your lovely samosas and spring rolls at morning tea!*

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**Rev Viv Coleman gave us this Benediction:**

*Lord, help us to live this day quietly, easily;  
To lean on your great strength trustfully, restfully;  
To wait for the unfolding of your will patiently, serenely;  
To meet others peacefully, joyfully;  
To face tomorrow confidently, courageously;  
In the name of Christ. Amen*

## A Matter for Prayer

Many of you may know that John and Robin Twemlow have sold their house in Kuaotunu, and will be moving away from the area later this year. John currently leads our worship team, is chairman of the Parish Council, and has been serving on the Trust. Being an ordained minister 'Reverend John' is also one of the few people authorised to conduct Communion services.

Alistair and Pat Rogers will also leave soon. Alistair has also been an 'authorised' Communion celebrant and both have been members of the Trust. We will miss all these faithful people and their service to our fellowship over the years.

We often invite visiting ordained Ministers to lead our Communion services, but we now need to nominate at least one other Communion celebrant from our local fellowship. If you feel God is calling you to this role, please come forward to talk about it with Parish Council.

Our Fellowship is growing! The Spirit is moving in this place! And with attendances now regularly up in the high 30's we need to grow with it. But the Church is not only about Sunday services. For some time now Parish Council has been asking you all to pray for Spiritual guidance, to find the right people to support the Local Ministry Team and expand our ministry to one another and the wider community.

Recently we encouraged all of you to consider your own skills and enthusiasms, and to offer your support in whatever area you feel called to serve. The response was encouraging, so now have several more people actively able to support the work in all its aspects.

We are now in a position to support a part-time pastoral position. We want to work together with our congregation to clarify what role this person would be called to fill. What are the gaps in our ministry to the church and to the wider community? What has God planned for the Church here? Please pray for wisdom and guidance, especially for your Parish Councillors, and contribute your suggestions or ideas to this discussion. Please put them in writing so that we can record them, either into the donations boxes or by email to Dorothy.preece@worldnz.net.nz. May God lead us forward to fulfil His plans for this Fellowship.

## Our “Sharing” Service

On January 31<sup>st</sup> we had no-one available to preach, and so it was decided to invite people to come forward with their testimonies, faith experiences and stories. Nine people shared their special hymns and readings, and gave us new insights into their personal faith-building experiences. Eight of the nine were women, some of them standing ‘up front’ for the first time. The ninth contributor to the service was Colin Carr. Many of you will have seen Colin and Jean on the front page of the local *Informer* newspaper, celebrating their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary recently. They are new to the Parish. Colin has been involved with church music all his life, and when we asked for people to take part in the ‘sharing’, Colin announced he would get a men’s choir together! And so he did. Seven brave souls stood up to sing *Amazing Grace*, and were rewarded with applause. Age is no barrier for this sprightly Christian! Some found the service very moving, and everyone agrees we must do this more often – perhaps on the fifth Sundays?

Below: Colin Carr (far left) leads the men in singing *Amazing Grace*.



## Parish Register

Funeral: 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 - Elizabeth (Beth) Rintoul  
Rev Mary Petersen officiating



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### ***From the Internet: 'What is Peace?'***

*I heard of two artists who were asked to illustrate 'Peace'.*

*The first artist drew a beautiful picture of the countryside with green grass, warm sun, grazing cattle and a farmer sitting peacefully outside his cottage. A picture of quiet tranquillity.*

*The other artist drew a majestic, rugged cliff. Gnarled trees, twisted by years of violent winds jut from the craggy mountainside. Dark clouds hang low, and jagged lightning slashes the sky. First impressions are of violence, chaos and rage. But there, just visible in one of the crevices of the rock, tucked back just out of reach of wind and rain, is a nest with two small birds. Apparently unconcerned, they appear calm, cosy and peaceful as they patiently wait out the storm.*

*Isn't it the case, that we are often set about by outside pressures that threaten to disturb our inner peace. But there is a peace that is greater than the problems of life, built on the assurance that we will survive the storm, that we may even grow stronger because of it, and strong in the promise that we need not endure it alone.*

*This is the Peace of God, that passes all understanding.*

*We cannot hope to avoid the storms of life – God does not have favourites, He loves us all equally: **Matt 5:45** "God sends his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. He makes His rain to rain on the just and the unjust.."*

*God does not promise freedom from the storm, but peace amid the storm, and the strength to weather it. **Philippians 4:7** "And the peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus."*

# Sunday Worship @ St Andrew's

9:30 every Sunday

*Families with children are warmly welcomed. Quiet toys are provided in Church for the little ones, and Bible-based activities for older children*

## Worship Schedule:

Feb 7<sup>th</sup> Rev John Twemlow - Communion  
14<sup>th</sup> Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby  
21<sup>st</sup> Ross Millar  
28<sup>th</sup> John Ormsby (Katikati)

March 7<sup>th</sup> Rev John Twemlow - Communion  
14<sup>th</sup> Ladies' Bible Study Group  
21<sup>st</sup> Peter Chaffin  
28<sup>th</sup> Dorothy Preece



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## Worship at Continuing Care

*The residents at Whitianga Continuing Care Unit meet every Wednesday for a half-hour service of worship, in the lounge 11-11:30. Five churches take one service each month (some months have five Wednesdays).*

*St Andrew's turn is the first Wednesday of the month, usually led by Dorothy Preece, with Sue Donovan at the piano. Supporters are always welcome to help with the singing, finding page numbers – and enthusiasm!*



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## 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

# Parish and Community Information

## **Community Groups:**

- Monday**    **Upright & Active** 9am weekly exercise for active seniors  
Contact Carol 867 1097  
**Community meals** takeaway only, every Monday 3:30-5pm  
Contact Maureen 027 246 6164
- Tuesday**    **Sit and be Fit** 10am weekly for the less active  
Contact Viv 869 5295  
**Stitch n' Chat** fortnightly 1:30-4pm in the Hamilton Room  
Contact Julie 022 035 7631
- Wednesday** **Ladies' Bible Study** 10am weekly  
Contact Julie 022 035 7631  
**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 866 0556
- Friday**        **Cancer Support Coffee Morning** First Friday of each month.  
Contact Ruth 021 363 840  
**AA Driver Licensing** Second Friday of each month.  
(12 February, 12 March). No bookings allowed.

***St Andrew's service 9:30 every Sunday***

## **MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH**

### **St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church**

Corner Albert and Owen Streets, Whitianga / PO Box 368, WHITIANGA

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**Email:** [standrewswhitianga@gmail.com](mailto:standrewswhitianga@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** St Andrews Community Church Mercury Bay NZ

**Local Ministry Team:** Rev John Twemlow 021 0222 1394

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