

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 Ruth 021 363 840

- **Blind / Low Vision group** 10am-12 on **2nd Friday** of each month.

Contact Jackie 07 866 5054

The Church Op Shop

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

Contact Madeline 021 169 1637

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

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: Dorothy Preece 022 132 2061

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's by the Sea Community Church, Whitianga

NEWSLETTER - February/ March 2026

***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***

A Message from Charlotte – a Faith Journey like no other.....

I'm glad it's 2026. 2025 was a challenging year, if also one where I could see God's hand in my life as I walked a very interesting path. At the beginning of 2025 we found a house that we wanted to buy up on the hill. The price was within our range, and the house had many features which would allow us to live comfortably there with minimal adjustment. We put in our offer, which was accepted, and then came the challenge of selling our own house.

Months went by. Weeks of open homes without anyone through, no real sign of interest, no offers. Then in July, we had an interested buyer, but before we could get too far into discussions over details, a second buyer turned up for the house we wanted.

The way it turned out, we were given three working days for the sale of our house to go unconditional, otherwise we would lose the house we wanted to buy. Somewhat miraculously after all of those silences and uncertainties, we did this within two hours of the deadline. Come mid-July, we had sold our house and purchased a new one and were looking forward to a settlement date in September. All of that happening as smoothly as it did is difficult to explain without faith.

I had already done a lot of packing ahead of the open homes, but now that we were unconditional everything else needed to go as well. An early priority was emptying out the small transportable building I was using as my work office, which needed to be relocated to the new property. We needed this off site so that there was time for the grass to regrow where it had been standing. So in that first weekend after we went unconditional I started packing up my office.



On the Saturday morning I was carrying some boxes out to there to fill when I fell down the stairs. Long story short I broke my ring finger on my left hand. The break was initially misdiagnosed as something simple, and that has been an ongoing saga which even now isn't complete. It was a frustration at the time to be able to participate as actively as I wished in the packing of the house. As an aside, I had also hurt my back while cleaning at the back of a cupboard, and I blamed that for some ongoing lower back pain for several months past. I joked at the time that I was being given the opportunity to build patience as a fruit of the spirit. It was only half way a joke. If nothing else I have certainly had time to rest in the past months, time that I normally wouldn't have given myself.

One week after we moved into the new house in early September, things changed. It took a few weeks for everything to come clear but firstly my broken finger was properly diagnosed as the complex break that it is and something that will only be resolved through surgery. And secondly my cancer was discovered.

The honest truth is that the diagnosis is not great. But I have been blessed with proactive medical staff who have often gone beyond what they strictly needed to do, in order to help things progress. I have had major surgery, and the existing tumours have been removed. Sadly in spite of the success of the surgery we know that the cancer is still present within me. But in December I got the good news that there is no sign yet of any spread. This is better news than was initially anticipated given the type of cancer which is known to be very aggressive.

Given that good news I was then able to progress to the hand surgery I have been waiting for. Here again patience seems to be the lesson. It seems that the type of cancer I have is preventing my body from healing my broken bone, and when the surgeon attempted to put the jigsaw pieces back together, they simply shattered. However he has an alternative procedure in mind and I'm looking forward to having that done sometime in early February.

It would be entirely possible and reasonable to look at the events of 2025 and feel despondent. But I don't. If the diagnosis had come during the house move, it would have been incredibly stressful. Instead it happened after we had arrived here at our new house, and I feel settled and comfortable in the surroundings even if we still have many unopened boxes. The diagnosis has been very grim given the aggressive type of cancer we're dealing with, but at no point have I felt dismissed or left without a possible path forward.

Most beautiful of all, I know that there are many people praying for me and my family as we go on this journey. I have friends, colleagues and acquaintances all around the world thinking of me and praying for me and that knowledge bouys me up. Some of those people have admitted that their own faith isn't particularly strong, or that they haven't prayed in years, or that they don't know whether it does any good. Nevertheless they are doing this for me and I am very grateful.

I do not know what 2026 will bring. But I do know that prayer works, that I am blessed to have the faith I have, and the support that I have. There will be challenges, but I feel strong and strongly supported at this stage, and very much blessed.

Dear Charlotte, you are a blessing and inspiration to us all. Thank you for letting us all come with you on this journey. (Charlotte regularly updates her blog. If you would like to follow it, please email standrewswhitianga@gmail.com for the link.) In case you're wondering about the broken finger – Charlotte wrote her story by *dictating* it to the computer! How clever is that!

Parish Council News

Parish Council has regretfully accepted Charlotte's resignation.

Charlotte has edited the Newsletter, researched and advised us on many tricky and legal issues, and she has been the administration mainstay for Day Camp on the Community Support Trust. We will, of course, keep Charlotte involved!

The church looks lovely with flowers blooming, thanks to Joy's hard work. Thank you Joy! The upkeep of the church properties (Church, Opshop and Manse) is in good hands, now that we have Peter Finlayson and his team on the job. Peter can often be seen inspecting the buildings with a note-book in hand –*Jobs To Be Done* – and he's getting them ticked off one by one. Over Christmas, ably supported



by his wife Janet, Peter put up the Christmas lights outside the church (and took them down), and then moved on to waterblasting the building. Our one-and-only stained glass window on the street frontage looks SO much better now. Thank you Peter and Janet!

The vege. garden is looking great and continues to produce fresh veges, thanks to the labours of Kevin Pringle and John Pedersen. Any produce that cannot be used at the Manawa-Kai Community Meals is given to the foodbank at Social Services.

A Prayer for Communities in the Floodwaters and landslides.

Rev. Tara Tautari - General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Aotearoa.

God of compassion and steadfast love, we come before you with heavy hearts. We grieve with those who have lost loved ones, those whose homes are broken, whose whenua is scarred, whose livelihoods have been swept away.

Hold close the names, the faces, the stories that are known to you, even when words fail us. Be near to all who are afraid, displaced, or exhausted. Bring rest to bodies and peace to troubled spirits. Wrap your presence around those who feel overwhelmed by loss, uncertainty, and grief.

We give thanks for those who have run toward danger when others could not for first responders, emergency services, volunteers, and all who have laboured long hours with courage and care. Strengthen them, protect them, and renew them.

We give thanks for marae that opened their doors, for communities who have shared shelter, kai, warmth, and dignity, for neighbours who have checked on neighbours, for kindness that has risen like high ground in the storm. May these acts of manaakitanga remind us that we do not stand alone.

God of land and sea, of rain and river, teach us how to live with humility and wisdom in relationship with creation and with one another. Guide leaders, planners, and decision-makers toward justice, care for the vulnerable, and long-term healing of both people and place. In the days ahead, give patience where the road is long, hope where recovery feels distant, and courage to rebuild lives rooted in dignity and care. Hold Aotearoa in your mercy. Let your peace settle where the waters have raged, and let your love carry us today, and in the days to come. Āmine.

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"When you pass through deep waters I will be with you. Your troubles will not overwhelm you.... I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel who saves you, because you are precious to Me" Isaiah 43:2

If you would like to Donate to the Church and Parish:

BNZ Whitianga – 02 0496 0062562 00

Or to Donate to Manawa Kai Meals:

Westpac Whitianga - 03 1578 0108901

Worship at St Andrew's 10 am every Sunday.

Families with young children are very welcome. Quiet toys and Bible activities are provided at the back of the church.



Preaching Schedule:

Feb	1st	Dorothy Preece	Communion
	8th	Ofa Pouona - Methodist Synod / Lay Preacher	
	15th	Rev John and Robin Twemlow	
	22nd	Vanya Wallis - Kaimai Presby. Mission Secretary.	
Mar	1st	Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby	Communion
	8th	Dorothy Preece	
	15th	Deacon Margaret Birtles – Methodist Synod	
	22nd	Bill and Robyn Woodward	
	29th	Bill and Robyn Woodward	
		- And 5pm Combined Churches service at Whitianga Baptist	

We are forever thankful for the many friends of St Andrew's who give their time and energy to travel over the hill to bring God's Word to us.

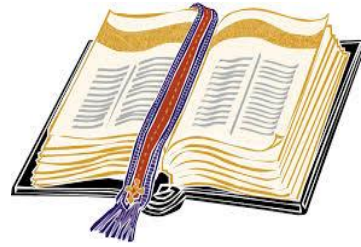
This month we welcome Ofa Pouona, a Methodist Lay Preacher who, with Deacon Margaret Birtles, is also Co-Convener of the Waikato-Waiariki Synod.

In February we also welcome back Vanya Wallis from Kaimai Presbytery.

Last month, for the first time we welcomed Pastors Andrew and Elizabeth Warren, who have just retired from ministry in Tauranga, "not retired but re-energised." The Warrens intend to re-visit the mission fields in Uganda and India this year, but they will be with us again in August.

Ladies' Bible Study and Prayer Group

The group meets every Wednesday at 10:00 am.
We are continuing with Pastor Stephen
Armstrong's in-depth studies of Matthew's Gospel
which we started last year. If any ladies would
like to join us, please contact **Julie 021 169 1637**.



Watch this space - In a few weeks' time Julie will also be introducing another
short series of video Bible studies at the church, open to all. These proved very
popular last year.

Excerpts from the poem 'The Dash' by Linda Ellis

A Minister stood up to speak, at the funeral of a friend
Referring to the tombstone dates, from the beginning to the end.
The date of birth and date of death, (he spoke of that with tears)
But he said, what mattered most of all, was the dash between those years.
For it matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash,
It matters only how we live and love, and how we spend our **dash**.
So think about this long and hard – are there things you'd like to change?
Though we know not how much time is left, there's time to re-arrange.
So when your eulogy is read, your life's actions to re-hash,
Will you rest in peace, content with how you lived **your dash**?

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Sunday Morning Tea Roster

Our morning tea get-together after Sunday services is a very
important part of our Fellowship, and enjoyed by all, but
there are now several gaps in the Morning Tea Roster.
Anyone who is willing to help on one Sunday each month,
please ring **Madeline 021 115 4767**.



Snippets from the Pulpit

What might we become, with the Spirit's help?

At the Combined Churches service in November Pastor
Mike Walker told us – 'God loves you just the way you are
– but He doesn't want you to stay that way.' Since then
the same theme has been expanded upon from various
preachers. For instance, '*Our life - what we are, and who
we are, our gifts and abilities are God's gift to us. What
we do with our lives, what we become, is our gift to God.*' The Father wants us
to grow in faith and confidence, and with the Spirit's help we can do it.



Pastor Andrew Warren reflected on Psalm 90. He reminded us that our
days are numbered. Our life has its seasons, and with the Spirit's help,
through it all we can grow in wisdom. At the start of our lives, there is a 'first
time' for everything, first steps, first job, first love, but eventually there comes
a 'last time' for doing some things. The last time for going overseas, or the last
time for moving house. Andrew urged us to view every season of our lives as a
season of blessing, to put our lives in the Lord's hands and see how we can
bring glory to His name, grow in wisdom, and receive blessing at every stage.

Another preacher reminded us, 'When God is in control, we have
nothing to fear.' **F_E_A_R is 'False Evidence Appearing Real.'**
Evil is everywhere – FEAR is everywhere, and the Evil One will always look for
ways to wear us down, sow seeds of doubt and discouragement. But if we are
armed with the Spirit's power and protection, we can become strong.

Jesus said, 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' In Bible study we learned that
in Bible times, salt was not refined enough to be sprinkled on the plate. It was
collected from the beach, or the salt flats, and it was contaminated.
Salt, in those days was used **as a preservative, and as such, it was essential to
daily life**. So Jesus is not only calling us to '*the flavour of the Jesus life*' - He is
calling us to preserve the Gospel of Truth and Love – to preserve 'The Way, the
Truth and the Life,' to reject the teachings of false prophets and FEAR mongers.
We can become Defenders of the Faith.
May God bless us in our faith learnings. *Dorothy.*