

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH
St Andrew's by the Sea Community Church, Whitianga.
NEWSLETTER JUNE - JULY 2026

***Our Mission: 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: Robyn Balfour

We have recently welcomed Robyn to the St Andrew's Fellowship. She is already well known to us as 'the lady with the Christmas boxes.'

Robyn was born at Huntly maternity hospital. Her father, John Cheyne ran a dry-stock farm in the Matahuru Valley, towards Te Kauwhata. He also contracted for hay and silage. Her mother, Heather, was a seamstress. Robyn had 2 brothers and a sister.

Her parents never took them to church but people up the valley, Malcolm and Trixie Crawford, became very significant figures in forming Robyn's faith.

"There was no local church, so they met in the Matahuru Valley Hall," Robyn recalls. "They took us to church and Sunday School, all squeezed into their car. We went to Bible Class, and to the youth group which I attended until I left home."

Robyn went to Waiterimu Primary School and later to Te Kauwhata College. She excelled at athletics and developed a love of sports which has continued with her through life. Robyn ran 100 and 200 metre sprints. She won the athletics championships for both schools at the Porritt Stadium. She completed her schooling at Huntly College.

In the early 80's Robyn's parents bought a holiday home in Dundas Street, Whitianga and Robyn spent many happy times there.

"When I was 14 we went by bus to a Christian rally in Auckland. I can't remember who was leading it, but I felt the warming of the Spirit and I went forward and gave my heart to Jesus that night."



Robyn's first job was with the Papakura Council. She boarded at the home of an elderly lady with her friend Christine. "I was very young in my faith. While I lived at home the Crawfords were my Christian family and supported me, but away from home I had no faith support and I didn't go to church for some time."

Robyn took an Access Course in sport and recreation, and then worked at Wilson's Carvery in Hamilton.

In 1991 Robyn married her first husband. They were married for 9 years before that marriage failed. Robyn moved to Whitianga and worked at the Buffalo Beach store, and later at the IGA store (where Subway is now).

In 2000 Robyn met Murray Balfour, a trucking contractor in Whitianga. They were married on Kuaotunu Beach with Rev Mary Petersen officiating, but Robyn had not yet re-joined a church. Their sons, James and Ryan came along and in 2006 the family moved to Geraldton, Australia where Murray was employed in the mines. Robyn took her boys to Boys Brigade, and there she met Jenny de Vries who became another leading light in Robyn's life. Jenny had boys of a similar age and they became firm friends. The Geraldton Church had formal Sunday morning worship, but on Sunday evenings they had a pot-luck meal and a more relaxed atmosphere. Jenny invited her to church, and Robyn's faith was rekindled when she found a church family to belong to. The Balfour family moved back to Kuaotunu for a brief period in 2009 when Murray's Mum was unwell, and their third son, Liam was born.

2011 found them back in Geraldton with three boys. This time Murray worked away from home in the iron ore mines. Robyn had previously taken on Teacher Aid training in Australia and Jenny encouraged her to apply for a job with the hospital as an Allied Health Assistant. Robyn didn't think she would get the job, but she did – and it took her to different schools around the district, working with individual children in the field of speech therapy. She really loved that job.

The family moved back to Kuaotunu in 2015. Robyn found it very hard to leave her job and her church family behind, but she felt strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Here she joined the C3 Church and her faith has never looked back.

In Australia Robyn had enjoyed her involvement with Boys Brigade, and with three boys to raise she felt the Spirit prompting her to start a troupe in Kuaotunu. "I resisted for a while. I told God that he needed to find a man for the job, but the idea would not leave me."

In 2017 Robyn began to run Boy's Brigade in the Kuaotunu Hall.

It started with 2 boys and three leaders. The troupe met in Kuaotunu in the summer months, with the emphasis heavily on outdoor activities and sports, which Robyn is well qualified to organise. Eventually they moved to C3 Church in Whitianga for the winter terms.

They now meet at Kuaotunu Hall in the summer and at Whitianga Baptist in the winter. There are now 20 boys and a few girls in the troupe. Helpers are always needed. "I used to stress about finding leaders, but I've seen miracles happen in my life, and now I am learning to trust God to find the people. God has always come through."

Also while in Australia, Robyn learned about the Samaritan's Purse Christmas Child Appeal, where the churches send Christmas boxes to children in poorer countries. Some churches in NZ were sending boxes, but none locally, so Robyn made enquiries and became the organiser for the local area. With Robyn's strong determination, the Whitianga churches now send more than 300 Christmas Child boxes every year. "We still have to get Thames and Coromandel on board," Robyn says. It is a mission that takes up a great deal of her time. With that and Boys Brigade she is a very busy lady. Her three boys are still at home. Liam is still at school and his brothers are working locally. "I am learning to rely on the Lord and let Him lead. The Lord provides for us all.

"My faith wavered when I left home. I was young and no longer had that support. It is so important for young Christians to be supported by a church family.

"These days I find myself wanting to learn more and more about the Bible Prophecies. I still have connections with the Te Kauwhata group and we meet up occasionally. That group organises an important Prophecy Conference in Auckland every year. It's very powerful."

Thank you for sharing your story Robyn – and welcome to the St Andrew's Church family!

Advance Notices

Christmas Boxes

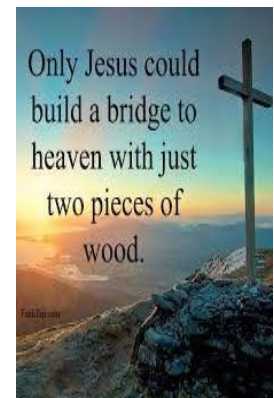
*Last year Robyn collected 300 shoeboxes and covered them herself with Christmas paper. We think this should be a team effort! So this year there will be a 'box wrapping' event at Crossroad Church on **Sunday July 12th 2:30 to 4:30**. Please come, and bring your friends along to help support Robyn's work.*



St Andrew's 'Made by Hand' craft display Thursday 17th to Saturday 19th September

This year this popular crafty event will be held in September to coincide with the Oceans Festival, hopefully to attract a few more visitors to the church. So now is the time to get those creative heads and hands working! Let's try to encourage more men to participate with their workshop projects this year.

*To book a space, and for more information,
contact Annie 027 322 3332*



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Flying Solo – but never alone....

On Sunday March 31st Steve Williams told us his and Martha's combined faith story, from South Africa to Whitianga. It involves Steve's experience, flying solo for many hours in a small plane. It's a powerful story and we will make sure to repeat it in the Newsletter 'Our people and their stories' before too long.

Invitation to Bible Study

*Steve is keen to start a Bible study for both men and women, individuals or couples. If you would like to know more, please
talk to Steve and Martha 027 855 2772*

**Worship @ St Andrew's -
10:00 am every Sunday.**
**We celebrate Communion on the
first Sunday of each month.**
Children are warmly welcomed.
**Quiet toys and Bible activities are
provided in the family pews.**



Preaching Schedule:

June	7 th	Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby	Communion
		*Congregational meeting follows this service.	
	14	*Favourite Hymns Service	
	21	Dorothy Preece	
	28	Bill and Robyn Woodward	
July	5	Bill and Robyn Woodward (Communion - Dorothy)	
	12	*Ofa and Seluvaia Pouono	
	19	Rev Shirley Barker- Kirby	
	26	Steve McRobie – Bible Society	

*We look forward to welcoming **Ofa and Seluvaia** back to our pulpit on July 12th. We met them for the first time earlier this year and we took them to our hearts. Both are preachers, both involved with the wider Methodist Church.

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Favourite Hymns Service - Sunday June 14th

List your favourites and place them in the big white box in the Church Hall. You won't be called on to speak unless you volunteer. Elizabeth and her support crew will lead the service. Let's raise the rafters! This is a great opportunity to invite friends and neighbours who might not otherwise come to church.



*The **Congregational meeting on June 7th** has been called to explore sources of finance needed to upgrade the Manse in Catherine Crescent, to bring it to Healthy Homes Standard. PCANZ (Presbyterian Church) owns the three Whitianga Church properties and Parish Council is seeking permission to use our PCANZ invested funds. On Tuesday 2nd Parish Council members visited the house to assess its condition. There is a lot to be done. Our Manse houses a family with 5 children and they deserve better.



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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

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Report - March 31st Combined Churches Service

The Whitianga Combined Churches services happen whenever there is a fifth Sunday in the month. The churches take turns to host it, and to choose the theme for the night. Each church is represented with a speaker.

On March 31st the service was held at St Patrick's Catholic Church. As it was Trinity Sunday, the theme was 'The Trinity'. Fr. Adrianus, a Franciscan friar, wore his traditional brown robe and set the tone of humility before God. Speaking of the Trinity, he said, "If you think you understand the nature of God, you simply don't understand anything. **But we believe.**" Others repeated the need for belief and trust without ever fully comprehending God. Crossroad Pastor Dennis Acraman said God sent Himself as an infant to our world because we humans need to have the immensity of the God's Truth "dumbed down to where we can see it and believe it."

Ladies' Bible Study

A small group of women meets at Dorothy's home every Wednesday at 10:00. They begin with a time of prayer. They are currently following Pastor Stephen Armstrong's studies on the Gospel of Matthew, and learning many new things about the context and the meaning behind the words. If you would like to join us, please ring **Julie: 021 169 1637**

Book Reviews

For a good many of the 'older and wiser' generation, settling down to read a book is still very much a favourite recreation and for some Christians, devotional books are a great way to explore our own faith and the faith experiences of others. So if you have found such a book, we invite you to recommend it in our Newsletter Book Reviews, beginning next issue.

Both Julie and Dorothy are currently reading **'The Greatest Story Ever Told' by Bear Grylls** of TV travel and adventure fame. Published H&S 2025, it is described as 'the true story of the Man from Galilee, told through the eyes of the people who knew Him best.' We will review it next time.

The book is available from the local Library. (Free to join!)

Please save stamps!

Lea Jooste continues to trim postage stamps, which we send to the Christian Blind Mission in Auckland. Last month we sent off an extra-large parcel of stamps donated from someone's stamp collection, and we received this: 'To the kind Parishioners at St Andrew's by the Sea – Thank you so much for the donation of stamps, which we will use to help build the Kingdom of God, and help children and adults with disabilities here and overseas.'

So please, if you do receive that rare commodity – a stamp on an envelope – please clip it, leaving a wide margin around it, and put it in the box on the table in the hall.



St Andrew's Church Hall Community Activities

- 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 **2nd Friday** of each month.
Contact Jackie 07 866 5054

The Church Op Shop

Open 9:30 am to 1:00 pm Tuesday to Saturday.

Active volunteers needed – come and see if this is for you!

Contact Madeline 021 169 1637

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