



# **Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church**

## **NEWSLETTER**

**December 2016/ January 2017**

**Minister: Rev Karel Lorier**



*Peruvian crèche scene*

## CHURCH DIRECTORY

### Minister:

Rev Karel Lorier

Mobile 021 903 762

Telephone 414 6321

E-mail: [karellorier@gmail.com](mailto:karellorier@gmail.com)

### Administrator:

Jo Wyman-Macer

#### Office Hours:

Wednesday : via phone and email

Thursday - Friday: 9am - 1pm

Telephone: 478 6180.

Email: [preschurch.mairangi@xtra.co.nz](mailto:preschurch.mairangi@xtra.co.nz)

Street Address: 10 Penzance Rd,  
Mairangi Bay.

Postal Address: PO Box 65299,  
Mairangi Bay.

Website: [www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz](http://www.bayspresbyterian.org.nz)

### Parish Clerk:

Stewart Milne

Telephone: 478 5786.

### Property & Finance:

George Wyman

Telephone: 478 6411.

### Social Worker

for the Elderly:

Melinda Gama

Mobile: 027 308 5015.

**SUNDAY SERVICE: 10am**

**WEDNESDAY COMMUNION: 2.30pm**

## PARISH ACTIVITIES IN DECEMBER/JANUARY

- GIRLS' BRIGADE**  
 Tuesdays during School term. Church Hall 6.30-8pm.  
 Final session for 2016 29th November  
 Kay Barbour Ph 478 7603
- GARY SYME'S BORN AGAIN BODIES**  
 Wednesdays 1.00-2.00pm Mairangi Bay Church Hall.  
 Final Session for 2016 7 December  
 Simple exercises to strengthen muscles and bone density.  
 Gary Syme Ph 479 2212
- LUNCHEON GROUP**  
 Thursday December 8 12-2pm Christmas shared lunch  
 Te Atatu Men's Choir  
 Raewyn Henderson Ph 410 4423.
- HOUSE GROUP**  
 Contact Dorille Ph 479 3953.
- FRIDAY NIGHT DISCUSSION GROUP**  
 Meeting 18 November 6.30pm shared meal  
 For further information  
 Jenni & Allan Jones Ph 478 5694.
- DEE'S SOCIAL GROUP**  
 Thursdays 10am Mairangi Bay Church Hall  
 For further information  
 Stewart Milne Ph 478 5786.
- MAINLY MUSIC**  
 Fridays 10-11am during the school term. Mairangi Bay Church Hall. Final session for 2016 9th December  
 Pre-schooler music and movement. All members of the community are welcome. No waiting list.  
 Pauline Gulliver Ph 478 4051
- WEDNESDAY COMMUNION**  
 Wednesdays 2.30pm in the church,



## FROM THE MINISTER

Dear Friends,

How rapidly things change! We had hardly had time to get used to the idea that Donald Trump had been elected President of the USA and what that might mean for our far-away-corner of the world when a large part of our country was struck by a massive earthquake. Nothing stays the same. I know that as a photographer. Light and expressions change rapidly never to be repeated. Things change all the time even within seconds. The present is ephemeral and transient. We cannot hold on to it or savour it or lament that those things we don't like or find irksome will always stay the same. The next moment will be different despite our aversion to change.

Old Testament scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann catches this idea in writing about hope: "Hope reminds us that the way things are (and all the extrapolations from that), is precarious and in jeopardy. Hope reminds us not to absolutise the present, not to take it too seriously, and to treat it honourably, because it will not last."

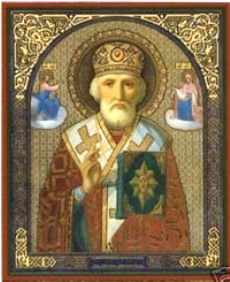
Things will change. New possibilities will arise. Live in the present, but hope for the future; a future different from the past; a future in which we trust in God as we know God through Jesus Christ. The season of advent is one of hope for the future.

We, like the ancients, look forward to the birth of Jesus among us. Jesus was born at a time when his people were suffering an occupation by an oppressive foreign power, the Romans. They had taken over the land from which the people had supported themselves and their families. Subsistence fishing was taxed in kind and became a commercial fishing industry for the Romans. People were poor and hungry. Hopes were high that something would change. They hoped for God's intervention through a military leader who would conquer their enemies.

In the event something quite different happened. Jesus was born. He became a humble, itinerant teacher of wisdom, offering non-violent resistance to Rome and to a religion that was closed to the many ordinary people. He taught in pithy riddle-like short statements and parables about what it would be like in the Kingdom of God – the best possible world – as opposed to the kingdom of Rome. He was crucified - a punishment reserved for the enemies of Rome. But things did not end there. After his death he appeared to his followers. Within a few years his teaching and life affected people so much that he changed the way they understood God. John wrote "God is love." Others saw him as the wisdom of God that existed before the creation of the world.

Jesus life and teaching is world changing transcending national and ethnic boundaries. Christianity has shaped the Western world and influenced much of the rest of the world. Therefore we celebrate Christmas with all the trimmings, gifts, special food, wine, gathered friends and family. The white bearded man in the red suit, Santa Claus will also feature.

He has evolved (now heavily commercialised) from one of Jesus' generous followers, Saint Nicolas, who, often anonymously, helped the poor. He epitomised the open hand generosity Jesus taught, which is very much the spirit of Christmas.



*The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.*

We will be preparing ourselves for Christmas over the next few weeks during the Advent season as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Over Christmas there will be two significant celebrations. On Christmas Eve we will sing carols from 7 pm. This will be preceded with hot dogs and some Christmas fare from 6 pm.

On Christmas day we will celebrate Jesus' Birthday in a brief service at 9.30 am. Please make these two occasions known to family and friends.

Erica and I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Shalom

Karel Lorier



## UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL

At the November Meeting of parish Council we :

- Discussed pastoral matters. Karel is particularly busy visiting our members who are struggling with health issues. It is important that we keep him advised of situations as they arise.
- Had a report back from Norma Baker on the two meetings of the Pastoral Visitors held in November. Our system of pastoral care is very important to us and we again emphasised the need for our pastoral visitors to develop a relationship with those on their list so that there is an understanding of who the members of our church community can turn to when there is a need – including the minister, their pastoral visitor, Norma Baker (as Convenor of Pastoral Care) or me.
- Passed on to Karel the positive messages that came from those who attended the grandparents and grandchildren service we had on 13 November. We had about 80 present with 27 grandchildren. Some of the questions that came from the grandchildren along with points of wisdom to be passed down will now be used in our family focussed services which are held on the first Sunday of each month.
- Passed on to George Wyman the complimentary comments we are all receiving on the state of the property – it's looking good.
- Were advised by Dorille on the planning for Christmas brunch on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Dec and the social occasion being planned for after the choral Christmas service to be held on 18 Dec. Erica is also organising a hot dogs and Christmas cake/mince pies special starting around 6pm on Christmas eve ahead of the 7pm carol service.
- Gave preliminary consideration to a proposal from Northern Presbytery for a reorganisation involving establishing 3 regional groups under the Northern Presbytery umbrella for the purpose of developing closer links between churches within a geographical area. There is still a lot of thought to go into this proposal.
- Spent some time how we will progress the development of our revised Mission Plan. This will be initiated at our planning session during the church service on 20 November. Revision of our plan is a step that needs to be taken before we can commence the process of calling a minister to fill the vacancy left by Caleb. In this regard Karel has made it clear that he is prepared to stay on as our interim minister until we succeed with a call however he will not be seeking the permanent position.



- We were delighted to receive a grant of \$4k from the Southern Trust towards play ground equipment to be installed in the area above the courtyard

*Stewart Milne*



The Parish Council men were the first to play in the new sandpit



Photos by J Wyman Macer

## KAREL LORIER'S REFLECTIONS

### Are the stories of Jesus' birth true?

There are two different stories of the Jesus' birth in the New Testament. They are very different, but in Christmas pageants, Christmas Carols and popular retelling they are amalgamated, so we are led to think there is only one story. Mark's Gospel, the first gospel written, on which Matthew and Luke are dependant, has no birth story.

*Matthew* begins with a long genealogy before Mary is found to be pregnant before she and Joseph were married. Joseph is told in a dream not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife because the son she is carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Matthew supports this quoting Isaiah, "*A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel (which means God with us.)*" This was written 800 or so years before in Hebrew and is about another situation. The text refers to a "young woman" not a virgin, but in the Greek translation, used by the early church, this is mistranslated "virgin".

The baby, born in Bethlehem, is visited by wise men from the East who have followed a star. They called on King Herod and announced that they were looking for a baby, born to be King of the Jews. Herod instructs them to go to Bethlehem where tradition has it (Micah 2:6) the Messiah will be born. The wise men find Jesus and give him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They are told in a dream not to go back to Herod.

Joseph is told in dream that Herod would be looking for Jesus and that they should escape to Egypt. Mathew quotes Hosea 2:15, "*I called my son out of Egypt.*"

Herod realises his visitors have tricked him and kills all the boys in Bethlehem two years and under. Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31.15.

After staying in Egypt for some time Mary, Joseph and Jesus return to Israel but are afraid to go back to Bethlehem, so they settle in Nazareth.

*Luke* has a very different birth story. An angel appears to Mary to tell her she will give birth to a son. Mary says, "*I am a virgin, how can this be?*" *The angel replies, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest on you. For this reason the holy child will be called Son of God."* Mary then sings a poetic song of praise.

Later a Roman census is called and Joseph, promised in marriage to Mary who is heavily pregnant, travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem (a distance of approximately 150Km and a difficult journey). Women Biblical Scholars say this story can only be written by a man!



An angel appears to shepherds who are very afraid, but the angel says, *“I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David’s town your Saviour was born - Christ the Lord.” A great army of heaven’s angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: “Glory in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!”*

The shepherds travel to Bethlehem to see what has happened, and see Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. Remember there was no room in the inn. A week after his birth, Jesus is named and circumcised. Later, Jesus is taken to the temple to perform the ritual cleansing ceremony. He is recognised by two devout people, Simeon and Anna, who are looking for the Messiah. Mary, Joseph and Jesus return to Nazareth.

Clearly these two stories are incompatible. They are myths. They are not factual stories like we would (hopefully) find in our newspapers. Like all myths, they have a surplus of meaning and point to something very important. Both evangelists wanted to underline the unique importance of Jesus. Important powerful people, including Roman emperors, were reputed to be born to virgins.

Matthew wanted to portray Jesus as a new Moses, a lawgiver. Those who know their Old Testament well will recognise the similarities in these stories.

Luke portrays him as an exemplary Jew, who will set people free, lift up the poor and bring down the mighty.

Both want to show Jesus as the Messiah. Both want to place Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem where tradition has it the Messiah will be born. Although throughout his life and after he was known as ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’

There are indications that these stories are late traditions, Paul and other New Testament writers do not appear to know these stories. There are no gospel fragments and quotes in the church fathers of Luke’s birth story before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Matthew’s genealogy has four women who are involved in some sexual irregularity yet were seen to play an important part in Israel’s story. Were these told to counter some of the stories circulating about Jesus? He was called the “Son of Mary,” an insult at the time.

We in our time need to tell, re-tell and enjoy these wonderful stories. They were told to shout out the importance of Jesus – bringing love to the world. History has shown that his teaching, life and death, were world changing. To take these stories literally and factually is to miss the point.

*Karel Lorier*

## SOME NEWS FROM ASSEMBLY 2016

It is not possible to summarise all the Assembly news in our magazine but you can delve in more depth through the church's website. (PCANZ)

### Snip Bits

- The Right Rev Richard Dawson is the current Moderator for two years.



The Very Rev Andrew Norton has been re-elected as Moderator Designate. This is a unique move and he will once again take over as Moderator in 2018.

- The Assembly rejected the view that earthquakes are divine punishment and sent prayers and support to the areas of New Zealand recently devastated by earthquakes and floods.
- The Assembly maintained the position that Presbyterian clergy should only marry a man and woman couple. (Passed by 1 vote)
- A social affairs group is being set up to give voice on social issues.
- The Very Rev Ray Coster has been appointed a White Ribbon Ambassador for the church and churches have been encouraged to continue to take part in the campaign. As Cam Ronald, Chairman of the White Ribbon Committee said "Preventing violence requires communities to clearly reject violence and to emphasise their respectful values. Faith-based communities can do this as they connect with many different people and are about positive, peaceful values. Ray commented "Changing men's attitudes and behaviour towards women can be done, but it does require modelling compassion and patience."
- Various administrative changes are listed in the proceedings from the Assembly.

*Adapted from a Thanksgiving Prayer by Diana Butler-Bass*

God, there are days we do not *feel* grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we do not understand what is happening in the world or with our neighbours. When the news is bleak, confusing. God, we struggle to *feel* grateful.

But this Christmas, we *choose* gratitude.

We choose to accept life as a gift from you, and as a gift from the unfolding work of all creation.

We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that gives life; and for the air we all breathe.

We choose to thank our ancestors, those who came before us, grateful for their stories and struggles, and we receive their wisdom as a continuing gift for today.

We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating and accepting them for who they are. We are thankful for our homes, whether humble or grand.

We will be grateful for our neighbours, no matter how they voted, whatever our differences, or how much we feel hurt or misunderstood by them.

We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Christmas, we do not give thanks. We choose it. We will make this choice of thanks with courageous hearts, knowing that it is humbling to say "thank you." We choose to see your sacred generosity, aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. That we all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose grace, free and unmerited love, the giftedness of life everywhere. In this choosing, and in the making, we will pass gratitude onto the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered at this table, we pledge to make thanks. We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around our family table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth.

We choose thanks.

Amen.

## CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

**Girls' Brigade.** Emma was farewelled on 8th November and girls spoke warmly of her contribution and how much she will be missed. The card from the Parish Council wishing her well in her new teaching career was delivered.

The older girls are starting on a fitness theme and the younger ones are making up Christmas gifts for Family Works (Presbyterian Support).

The group finishes on 29<sup>th</sup> November for this year.

*Kay*

**Mainly Music** is chugging along. We have a steady stream of regulars and new families that join us each week. Now on the count-down to Christmas.

Final session of 2016 Christmas craft party 9th December.

*Pauline*

**Born Again Bodies** continues with a steady attendance of about 15.

Final session of 2016 7th December

*Karel*

**Luncheon Group.** Numbers were down as many away or unwell for the November meeting and Orango was unable to attend, but the music was great from U3A Instrumental Group.

Our next meeting on 8 Dec is our Christmas Shared Lunch and we will be entertained by the Te Atatu Men's Choir. They are really worthwhile hearing, so please mark the date on your calendars.

*Raewyn*



*The trading table in full swing*

*Truus our versatile pianist*



**Dees Social Group** is going well with average attendance of members at 9 which speaks well of the popularity of the group given that we have only 10 on our roll at present.

Our limit is probably 12 per session in terms of our facilities and programme. We will be doing more publicity in the New Year but find word of mouth is still the best advertising mode.

The final session and Christmas Lunch is 22 December. The group resumes on 5 January .

*Stewart*



**Food Bank.** Treats for our special Christmas Gift parcels which are distributed by Family Works (Presbyterian Support) to vulnerable families are coming in. Currently we do not have enough goodies to fill the empty shoe boxes which have piled up. We will have to work hard to get up to the number of boxes that we filled, wrapped and dispatched in the last few years.

*Stewart*

**Mairangi Primary School Aiding.** The last term has a somewhat different feel as we approach the end of the year. We hear so much about children misbehaving and so many negative views over the future but in fact it is great to get in amongst the children at the school and see the talent that is coming through.

*Stewart*

Love came down at Christmas,  
 Love all lovely, Love Divine,  
 Love was born at Christmas,  
 Star and Angels gave the sign.  
 Worship we the Godhead,  
 Love Incarnate, Love Divine,  
 Worship we our Jesus,  
 But wherewith for sacred sign?  
 Love shall be our token,  
 Love be yours and love be mine,  
 Love to God and all men,  
 Love for plea and gift and sign.

Christina Rossetti

## DECEMBER DATES

**4th (2nd Sunday in Advent) Christmas brunch after the service** For catering numbers please let Dorille know if you'll be there



**5th 7.30pm** Planning meeting for anyone who would like to be part of the revised parish plan. Let Stuart know if you would like to be part of the process.

**18th Choral Service (4th Sunday in Advent).**

The choir will present a program of carols and readings telling the Christmas story. Carols are universal in their appeal and we choose songs from a variety of countries and sources. This year we include a chorus by G.F. Handel, modern arrangements of Medieval latin texts, a Caribbean carol, carols based on well-known folk songs, a Quodlibet (simultaneous singing of 4 different tunes and texts– great fun!) and a laid-back Cowboy Carol (a lonely rider keeps watch out on the prairie). Do come with relatives and friends to share the service with us.

*Patricia Campbell Choir Director*



**22nd Dec -  
Dee's group Christmas party and final 2016 session**



**24th Dec - Hot dogs and Christmas nibbles 6pm followed by Community Carol Singing 7-8pm.** Invite your friends and families



## JANUARY DATES

**Flowers** Erica Brash

**1st New Year's Day Service 10am**

**5th Dee's group resumes**

**8th Service 10am**

**15th Service 10am**

**22nd Service 10am. Newsletter deadline** for activity start up dates and news

**29th Service 10am**

### ***Church Giving***

There are a number of ways people contribute financially to support the running of the church and our ministries to the wider community:

- ☐ Cash or cheque donations into the Sunday plate
- ☐ Regular giving through the Envelope system. We will soon be preparing numbered offering envelopes for January – June 2017.

If you would like to be added to the system for income tax donation purposes **contact Norma Baker on 443 3108 before December 4th**.

If you have spare envelopes you can use them. Please let Norma know if you have plenty.

- ☐ The Automatic Payment system. This is particularly good for busy people and can be used for intermittent or regular donations.

The account number of the church is **03 0180 0052341 02**

- ☐ Receipts are issued annually for regular giving and can be used for tax deductions.



## CALENDAR OF PARISH EVENTS FOR 2016

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>CONTACT</b>
Youth and children	10am	Mairangi Bay Church	Sundays	Pauline Gulliver <b>478 4051</b>
Born Again Bodies	1.00—2.00pm	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	Every Wednesday	Gary Syme <b>479 2212</b>
Church Choir	7.15pm	Mairangi Bay Church	Thursdays in lead up to Special services	Patricia Campbell <b>476 0377</b>
Dees Social Club	10.00am	Mairangi Church lounge	10.00am-2.00pm Every Thursday	Stewart Milne <b>478 5786</b>
Fellowship Group	To be advised	To be advised	To be advised	Dorille Shadbolt <b>479 3953</b>
Friday Night Discussion Group	6.30pm	To be Advised	3rd Friday of the month	Jenni & Allan Jones <b>478-5694</b>
Girls Brigade	6.30pm - 8.00pm	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	Every Tuesday in school term	Kay Barbour <b>478-7603</b>
House Group		22A Hastings Rd	TBA	Dorille Shadbolt <b>479-3953</b>
Luncheon Group	12.00 noon	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	2nd Thursday of the month	Raewyn Henderson <b>410 4423</b>
Mainly Music	10.00am-11am	Mairangi Bay Church Hall	Every Friday in school term	Pauline Gulliver <b>478 4051</b>
Parish Council	7.30pm	Mairangi Bay Church Lounge	3rd Tuesday of the month	Stewart Milne <b>478 5786</b>
Transportation	Arranged as required and as requested			Norma Baker <b>443 3108</b>