



## **Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church**

**NOVEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER**

**Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph**

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

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***George Wescott Wyman October 8 1939- October 8 2023***

## **UPDATE FROM TOKERAU**

Much on social media show people who are very fired up about something.

That something is related to the conflict between the state of Israel and the Hamas elected Government of Palestine. The tension between Israel and Palestine has been raging for decades but heightened more recently by the Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians on 7th October. Israel's response was constant bombardment of Palestinian areas causing considerable casualties including innocent civilians. Actions of both sides have fuelled outrage and massive demonstrations around the world where thousands have protested on the streets of major cities and university campuses. People are fired up and want something done about it. In fact, they are demanding it.

Bringing attention to our local context, I too am fired up about something. But I'm not fired up with outrage about a conflict; rather, I'm fired up with hopeful excitement about a different challenge. That challenge is the seemingly lack of interest or vitality in our ministry. I've been noticing that attendance numbers to our 10am services have been dropping. Participation in our monthly Friday night games has also been waning and it's future uncertain. While our Mainly Music ministry and the English Conversations Group continues connecting with new families and community folk in very positive and helpful ways, developing those connections further into Christian faith and community with us is not so obvious.

Recently we celebrated Kay Barbour and her tremendous commitment and contribution to the Girls Brigade ministry here in and through our parish. Sadly, though, it also signalled the end to such a long-standing ministry. These few examples seem to indicate that we are perhaps growing tired and have no more life left for anything positive.

So, what do I have to be fired up about? How can we be positive about our ministry when considering some of the concerns raised above? What hope do we have?

I'm fired up because while I acknowledge the difficulties we face, like the world-wide protests about Israel-Palestine conflict, our difficulties in ministry motivate me to do something about it. In fact, they demand I/we do something about it. Rather than responding in outrage or perhaps despair, we can be hopefully excited because we belong to God in whom and through whom all things are possible. The possibility can include the revitalisation of all aspects of our parish life. This is something that may not be easy to achieve but is possible as we prayerfully and faithfully pursue it.

The revitalisation of parishes is also the vision of Northern Presbytery. It is entering into a partnership with an organisation called City to City Australia (CTC) that specialises in assisting congregations rejuvenate their ministries. I've been selected along with two others from Northern Presbytery to train with CTC in their work with a first cohort of some of our parishes. So, I hope our parish might be part of this. If not, then I'm hoping the knowledge and skills I receive will enable me to implement them in our parish.

***So let's get fired up together!***

*Tokerau*

Its time to get Fired up  
Its time to revitalize

## **WORDS FROM KAREL**

### **The Story of the Birth of Jesus**

This is the time of Advent when we look forward to Christmas. Our children and grandchildren will be involved in Christmas activities, the singing of carols and recounting of the story of the birth of Jesus. Maybe they will participate in a pageant or hear stories (along with Santa and his reindeer) of a star in the East, shepherds and Angels, no room at the inn, wise men bringing gifts and a donkey carrying heavily pregnant Mary to Bethlehem with an enigmatic Joseph by her side. Many people believe that these are “the biblical stories” although in fact they are two irreconcilable stories amalgamated into one.

Of the four gospels telling the story of Jesus, Mark, the first gospel written, does not have a story of Jesus’ birth, Matthew and Luke have different stories, and John's gospel has no birth story, and depending on how you interpret the story, has Jesus existing before the creation of the world.

Matthew's gospel has Mary and Joseph living in Bethlehem. Jesus is born to the virgin Mary in the time of King Herod. Astrologers, wise men from the East, notice a new star wandering and follow it. This is before human made satellites race across our night sky. When they reach Jerusalem, they ask King Herod where a royal birth is to take place. King Herod is naturally suspicious of a rival. He asks them if they find out to let him know.

When they find the child they worship him and offer gifts. However, they are told in a dream not to go back to Herod. Joseph is warned in a dream to escape and takes the child and his mother to Egypt where they stay until Herod dies. In the meantime, Herod discovers that he has been tricked and orders the killing of all the boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding district. Joseph is told in another dream when Herod dies and they return from Egypt to settle in the little town of Nazareth.

The story in Luke's gospel is more elaborate. During the reign of King Herod the birth of John the Baptist is announced, then the birth of Jesus is announced to the virgin Mary. Mary and Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother) meet and Mary's sings a song of praise which is a liberation hymn. At the birth of John the Baptist Zechariah, John’s father, prophesies liberation through the one whom his son John will announce.

Then the story of Jesus’ birth is told. There is to be a census and all of David's descendants have to return to Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth 150 Km over rough terrain with the heavily pregnant Mary on a donkey. Clearly a man wrote this story! There was no room in the inn. There would not be because there would have been 40 to 50 generations of descendants of King David who had quite a number of wives! It is unlikely that there would have been any city in the ancient world that would have contained that crowd of several million.

Shepherds in the field hear angels and go and worship the child. The following week Jesus is circumcised. The normal forty day period of cleansing is followed by a dedication at the Temple. When they have done “all that is required of the law of the Lord” they return to their home in Nazareth. Note no wise men or astrologers, no star in the east, no travel into Egypt nor jealous King Herod killing boys under two years old.

We have here two different stories. They are myths, stories that mean much more than their surface meaning, explaining to people of the time, for whom they were written, that in the life of Jesus something of world changing proportions has happened. These stories only make sense if they are placed in their original context and interpreted with a thorough knowledge of the First Testament. To the ancient world they screamed out, like today’s banner headlines or wall to wall TV coverage, the importance of Jesus Christ. This was their way of talking about an extraordinary human being who revealed the character of God. Ordinary everyday language failed. Should we in our age of scientific and factually-based history discard these myths? Heaven forbid! They are important stories for our time as well. If we want factual history this is the wrong place to look for it. They were never intended to be factual history in the way that we understand it today.

If the stories draw us in, delight us with a sense of wonder and direct our attention to Jesus shouting out to us that here, in this man, something unusual is happening, then they do what the stories were intended to do. In this man Jesus we see the divine, God breaks into our world, as the well know Christmas carol has it, “Love came down at Christmas,” – the world would never be the same.

My hope for all of us is that amidst, hoopla, hype, gatherings, parties, appearance of the bearded man in red, and carol singing, and retail frenzy, you will make time to reflect on what the birth of Jesus means. As I write I am hearing of the explosion of a hospital in Gaza and incredible suffering in Israel and Gaza, ethnic cleansing in Sudan, with whole villages wiped out, and the enormous death toll, injuries, and displacement of people in Ukraine. And just in case we think these things are happening far away, I hear that there are thousands of people in New Zealand who rely on food parcels given by charities to survive.

There is ample room for the love, sharing, forgiveness, peace-making and the healing Jesus teaches, no matter in what form it is given or who gives it.

Please take a quiet moment to reflect on Jesus and what he teaches this Christmas.

## **UPDATE FROM PARISH COUNCIL**

The October meeting of Parish Council was constituted by Roopali who reminded us of the importance of having faith and trust in God.

We started the meeting with a one minute break of silent prayer of remembrance, appreciation and love for George Wyman (the Property and Finance Convenor of our church for more than 20 years) whose funeral was held earlier that day.

Matters covered at the meeting included:

- Advice that Dorille Shadbolt has taken over the responsibility for the Mission Boxes and Birthday Cards/Donations from Jean Allan whose long service in this area has been appreciated and acknowledged.
- Advice from Raewyn Henderson that the celebration of Kay Barbour's leadership in Girls Brigade for more than 60 years and the closing of the 13th North Shore Brigade will be held at 6:30pm on Tues 24 Oct.
- Tokerau's report back on General Assembly which he attended as our Commissioner. There were several important decisions taken at this reportedly positive gathering. We had daily summaries of the General Assembly business and these are available to be emailed to you – just let me know at [stewart.milne@xtra.co.nz](mailto:stewart.milne@xtra.co.nz) One thing that the Moderator requested was that parishes hold in-house discussions on those sensitive matters where there are differing views such as sexuality.
- The appointment of Stephen Martin as Property Convenor which was welcomed. We are looking for a way to meet the Treasurer responsibilities but in the meantime Joanne is handling the basic finance needs.
- A report back from Ian Watson as convenor of the Worship Committee who advised of the planning for those who will be leading the services of worship on the 4th and 5th Sundays through to June next year.
- A very positive report from Roopali Dayal on the growth of the Indian Congregation where 28 attended the 1 October Service
- Our response to the request from the Mairangi Bay Business Coordinator to take the lead in a Christmas Carols and Readings event in the Village Playground at 6:30 on Friday 8 December (see elsewhere in this newsletter)
- Agreement to start collecting for our Christmas Treats Packing Service which will be held on 3 December. (See details elsewhere in this Newsletter)
- Discussions on the results of the Church Life Survey and the attempt to make our communities more resilient with respect to disasters such as we experienced in the January floods. Our Church is involved with the planning for this (see elsewhere in this Newsletter for pieces on both of these matters)

## **Special Communion**

Tuesday, November 14th at 11:30 am.

There will be a time of fellowship and lunch following the service . We will provide transportation to and from the church if required.

If you would like to attend, could you please let your Pastoral Visitor know or call Norma Baker on 443-3108 before Nov. 9.

## **PARISH SURVEY**

Thirty seven of us participated In a survey conducted by Church Life Survey, New Zealand, who have subsequently sent back the snapshot it provides of our Parish. It shows that we are a well educated, elderly group, whose numbers declined a little (3%) post Covid, who have strong links to our community and strongly believe that environmental issues are important for Christians. We have clear goals for our parish and confident we will reach them. With respect to worship, we strongly believe that the presence of God is evident in our services. Our major concern is our offering to our youth and young people.

The full report is available through our Parish Clerk, Stewart Milne. It is well worthwhile perusing.

***Ian Watson***

***Parish Council on behalf of the Mairangi & Castor Bays Presbyterian Church has decided to donate \$600 to CWS for their Gaza Palestine Emergency appeal***





## **KAY'S RETIREMENT FROM GIRLS BRIGADE**

On Tuesday, March 24th there was a function to mark the retirement of Kay Barbour from the leadership of the 13th North Shore Girls Brigade. Kay was presented with her 60 year's of service certificate and medal. Kay's association with the movement began when she joined as a 12 year old Girls Brigader at Campbells Bay Methodist Church. Over the years, Kay has been widely recognised for her services. She has won the Girls Brigade Commissioners Award, the North Shore Community award, and the Paul Harris Fellowship Award of Rotary International.

Over 50 people attended the function. Included in their midst were members of our congregation, former members of the Girls Brigade operating out of our church, leaders of other Girls Brigades on the North Shore, Elisabeth Dickens the Administrative Director of the Girls Brigade in New Zealand, and Robin Holt, the Area Commissioner. The organiser of the function and the MC for the night was Amy Reddy who has had a longstanding association with our Girls Brigade which began as a new entrant when she was six years old.

During the function Kay shared memories of her time with the Brigade and she was the recipient of several gifts and certificates including a Certificate of Appreciation and gift from our Church with mention of her 'legend' status given her active involvement with so many church related services.

It was a great occasion and fitting recognition for a person who has given unselfish service to the Girls Brigade and to our church.

Efforts are being made to find a leader for the 13th North Shore Brigade so it can continue to be associated with our Church.

***Ian Watson***





## **MAKING OUR COMMUNITY MORE RESILIENT**

On Friday 27 January this year a significant weather event impacted communities across East Coast Bays. As we know several of our own Church Members including those in the Norfolk Apartments were badly affected. The Emergency Services were overwhelmed and there was a lack of ability to let local communities know what was happening, what was needed and where local resources could be obtained.

In response to this the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board provided support for community resilience planning. Our church (represented by Alastair Emerson and myself) responded to a request for community involvement and we joined the Mid Bays Resilient Communities Group (MBRC). The MBRC works with the Emergency Services and Auckland Emergency Management. It does not take over their role.

The MBRC goal is to see that our community: Knows about hazards and is prepared; Is connected and communicating; Coordinates action and supports each other; learns from past experience.

We have developed a plan and will be producing pamphlets for distribution. Meanwhile our church has agreed to become a Community Emergency Hub (CEH). The Art Centre, Community Church, Windsor Park and Latter Day Saints Churches have also agreed to be CEHs.

A CEH provides a point of connection, consolidates and verifies information and provides a place for people to feel supported and secure. In an emergency if our CEH is required it will be manned by volunteers from our Congregation who are able to get to it.

***Stewart Milne***

## **END OF YEAR MAIRANGI BAY VILLAGE ACTIVITIES -**

6:30pm on Fri 8 December - Sally Cargill the Coordinator for the Mairangi Bay Business Association asked for our church to take the lead in the event "Christmas in the Park" (actually in the Children's Playground !) starting at 6:30pm on Fri 8 December.

We have accepted the offer (it is a good community outreach) and we are currently investigating whether other churches wish to join in. Meantime please mark this in your diary / calendar – ***we need singing voices!!***

***10 - 12pm 25 November*** is also a Village event with vintage cars, games and stalls in the main park.



## **GEORGE WYMAN**

George had been the Treasurer and Property Convenor in this church for more than 20 years. I worked with him on many projects and on general church matters on a day to day basis. As a friend and someone I had huge respect for I thought I knew him and what he had achieved in his life fairly well but I was amazed at his funeral to learn of the many, many things he has done in the work, community and sporting areas.

Ian has chosen the photo of George on the church roof fixing the bell. That is a good choice. It shows George's hands-on, do-it-yourself and save-money approach to his responsibilities. Our church has benefitted greatly from George's leadership and commitment. He will be sorely missed. Thank you George.

*Stewart*



## REGULAR PARISH ACTIVITIES

- **SENIORS SOCIAL CLUB**

1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month 10am - 12pm

Contact Tangi 022 657 3223 or Raewyn 410 4423



- **BORN AGAIN BODIES**

1.00-2.00pm Wednesdays Church Hall.

Further information Ian Rankin Ph 479 2320 or 027 332 7235



- **ENGLISH CONVERSATIONS**

1pm - 2.30pm Wednesdays Meeting Room 2.

Further Information Stewart Milne 478 5786 Grace Liu 021 0487978



- **HOUSE GROUP**

7.30pm Wednesdays at the Shadbolt's

Contact Dorille Shadbolt Ph 479 3953.



- **DEE'S SOCIAL GROUP**

Thursdays 10am-2pm Mairangi Bay Church Hall

For further information Tangi Joseph 022 657 3223.

- **MAINLY MUSIC**

Fridays during School Term only. Church Hall 10-11am

Ph Karen Ruffell 021 02263846

- **FAMILY FUN NIGHT & SHARED MEAL**

1st Friday of the month Church Hall 6pm

Ph Tangi Joseph 022 657 3223

- **PARISH COUNCIL**

7.30pm every 3rd Tuesday of the month Church Lounge

Ph Stewart Milne 478 5786

*Please send photos of Parish activities through to  
office@bayspc.nz*

### Quick Contacts

- Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph Ph: 027 371 4733 tokerau.j@gmail.com  
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