



NEWSLETTER



OFFICIAL NEWS OF HAURAKI PLAINS CO-OPERATING PARISH



A MESSAGE FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS -REV PHIL BETTANY

Dear friends,

As we draw near to Christmas, we find ourselves once again invited into the mystery of God's love made flesh — Emmanuel, "God with us." It's easy, amid shopping lists, end-of-year events, and travel plans, to forget that Christmas is not only about what happened then, but what God is doing now.

The story of Bethlehem reminds us that God often chooses small, surprising places to reveal great things. A stable. A young couple far from home. A community caught off guard by the holy breaking into the ordinary. Perhaps our own lives — our homes, our town, our church — can be that Bethlehem again this year.

As we prepare, may we slow down enough to notice God's presence among us: in the kindness of a neighbour, the laughter of children, the quiet of a candle's glow. Each act of care and generosity reflects the light of Christ. In a world that still knows fear and uncertainty, we are called to be bearers of that light — people of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Whether you're travelling or staying close to home, may this Christmas bring you rest, renewal, and a renewed sense of wonder. And as we move toward a new year, may we continue to walk together — sharing faith, serving others, and trusting that the God who came to dwell among us still leads us forward.

With every blessing for a joyful and peace-filled Christmas,

Phil Bettany



MODERATOR'S ADVENT MESSAGE 2025

The madness of the commercial-driven Christmas season appeared overnight a few weeks ago. The message with a unified voice: Spend! Spend! Spend! Spend! A good Christmas depends on what you purchase to make others and yourself happy... and don't worry about the debt and hardship that will follow. And, in that build-up to Christmas, is the Advent Season marking the beginning of the liturgical year - if you are into that sort of thing. If not, Advent and Christmas are still the beginning of the Christian story.

Through Advent, we are focused on a pathway of powerful promises and, eventually, scenes of supernatural happenings in Matthew chapters 1 & 2. Those passages read like fairy tales to many, but in fact convey the mystery of God in the advent of Jesus. In a world of wars and rumours of wars, how about the first reading for the first Sunday in Advent, from Isaiah 2:4: "The LORD will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore". When I contemplate that verse, there is hope and relief that, for example, history is in the Lord's domain and in the end, institutions like the United Nations are not eternal. International peace will be a miracle of God, not the feeble attempts of human counsel.

The last reading on the fourth Sunday in Advent is Matthew 1:18-25. The virgin birth, the angel of the Lord appearing in a dream, the choirs of angels, and that star that pinpoints the place of Jesus' birth for the Eastern visitors.



For me, that passage of Scripture displays the mystery of God. A mystery that is still discoverable in our day, as God moves in mysterious ways through Christ in our midst. I am talking about people discovering a faith relationship with Jesus, coming in from a place way out from a fellowship of believers, miracles, spiritual and physical, in 2025 faith and peace in tragedy and grief. The faith of Mary and Joseph, the surprised awe of the shepherds, and the searching and discovery of the Eastern visitors. The mystery of God cannot be shackled by the likes of Herod's self-interest and unbelief, or noisy scoffers inside or outside the church.

So how does the Advent narrative cross over into a secular, largely non-religious society that is rediscovering spirituality? A story before offering an answer. I am a member of one of the Rotary Clubs in Invercargill. The club plays a significant role in organising the City Christmas Parade, which winds its way through the CBD on the last weekend of November, attracting thousands of people who line the streets and end up at Queens Park for an afternoon of festivities.

I have been a float vehicle driver for close to 15 years. I have towed the Santa Claus float a few times, reminding myself it was representing St Nicholas. I held up the parade one year because the Santa float trailer got a flat tyre, thankfully outside a tyre shop. "God is good all the time - all the time God is good!" About 10 years ago, there was no visible Christian presence in the parade. So, our church decided to sponsor a float depicting the manger scene. It was very plain. We used mannequins for the characters and stuffed animals, and a couple of bales of hay. We were placed about 25 in the line of about 30 floats. We were placed behind a float for a large chain store that sells building materials. They had a deafening sound system that broadcast the "Bob the Builder" theme throughout the journey. It drove me nuts!

The following year, we were separated from Bob the Builder and placed well within earshot of the crowds' comments. I could not believe the number of anti-Christian slurs and comments spoken our way about our faith and the meaning of Christmas. One was that God was as dead as our mannequin characters.

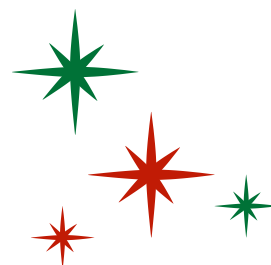
So, a bit of a rethink on our visible presence in a secular setting. The following year, we had Joseph and Mary as live human beings, with a few real human children, still with the baby doll Jesus and the stuffed animals. From about four years ago, we still have a plain-looking manger scene, a bit of Christmas music, a human Joseph and Mary in costume, as long as they have had a baby born during the year to represent baby Jesus, and as many angels, shepherds, and children dressed up as animals as we are allowed to fit on the big trailer we use.

Two years ago, our float was placed at the front of the parade, right behind the Pipe Band and Mayoral car, because, according to my secular friends who organise the parade, our presence sets the scene and reason for the season. I drove the float at the front the first year and enjoyed waving at Bob the Builder as we passed by on the return journey.

We live in a secular post-Christian age. What many of us are experiencing is that there has been a ground shift in our cultural settings from those who, before, wouldn't give Christianity a thought beyond "that is quaint" or "that's irrelevant", sometimes with a cuss and a swear. What I have described is not a revival of faith as such but drawing people's thoughts to the story of Jesus' birth. Our float is a tiny part of that. We need to be out in the secular world being seen. The story has power in it through the Holy Spirit's ability to open people's minds and hearts. Never underestimate that power.

The liturgical Season of Advent is a time of slow-down to prepare for Christmas, along a path marked by Old and New Testament passages. How will you tell this story, or will you avoid it or try to remove the mystery? One of the readings for the fourth Sunday of Advent is Isaiah 7:10 16. The Lord asks King Ahaz to ask him to do something as difficult as he can think of, even an impossible thing. Ahaz refuses because he would not test the Lord like that. So, the Lord chooses the difficult, impossible thing. Verse 14: "All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')".

Right Rev Peter Dunn
Moderator
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand



PAULINE GERMON INTERVIEWED BY RNZ

Pauline Germon has settled well into her new home in Gordonton. As many of you know Pauline in her younger days was a Principal Ballerina in the Royal New Zealand Ballet. She was recently interviewed by Radio New Zealand.

RNZ Concert's Clarissa Dunn talks with former RNZB Principal Dancer Pauline Tronson-Germon, who shares some of her favourite pieces of ballet music - all from roles she has danced - as well as the memories that come along with them.

"I've always felt music speaks to the soul, and I have been blessed all my career... to be listening to some of the most beautiful music ever composed."

Here is the link - **<https://www.rnz.co.nz/concert/programmes/three-to-seven/audio/2019012764/ballet-music-some-of-the-most-beautiful-music-ever-composed>**



Pauline Tronson and Jon Trimmer in the ballet Flower Festival in Genzano.

Photo: Supplied / Pauline Tronson-Germon

ONYA AWARD WINNERS

On Wednesday 26 November, Maria Baigent and Nicki Leventer were presented with Hauraki District Council ONYA awards! Congratulations Maria and Nicki, we are proud of you!

Individual Awards for Service to the Community

Maria Baigent: for her work supporting children in the community and as the founder of an equine assisted learning programme.

Service or Achievement in Arts and Culture Awards

Nicki Leventer: for her work as the Kerepēhi Brass Band treasurer, librarian, and media manager.



These citizens of Hauraki have been celebrated for their dedication to their community.
Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

MESSAGE FROM GAYE

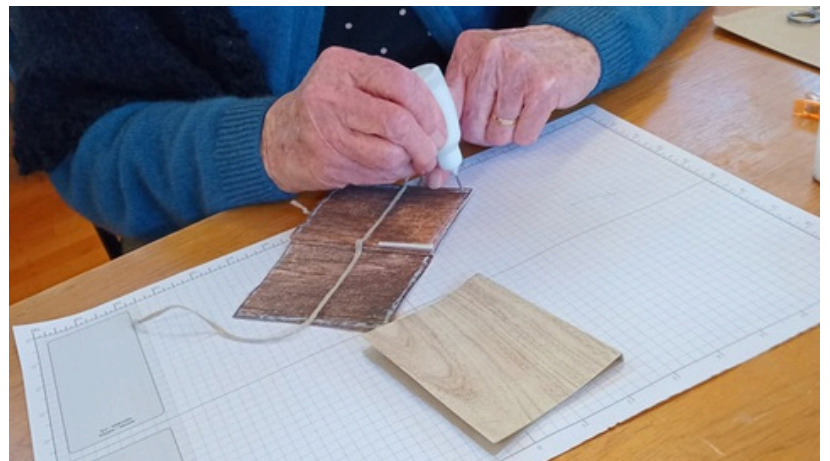
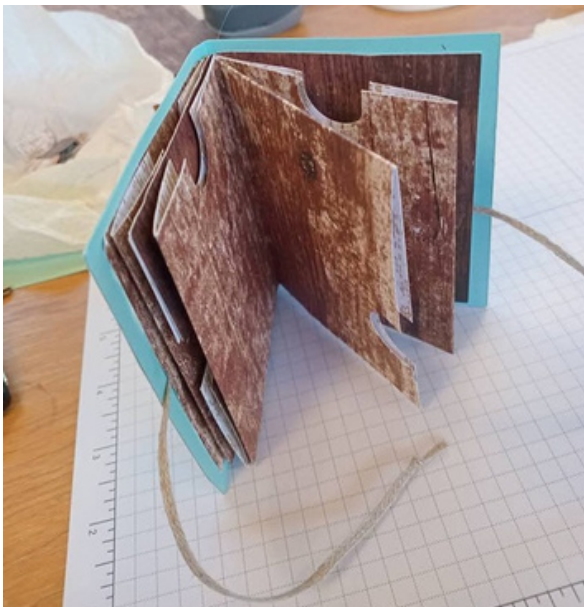
Gaye Rowberry sends her best wishes to everyone in the church. She hopes to come over for a service sometime.

STAMPING WORKSHOP

In October, Shona facilitated an exciting stamping workshop in the church hall, where we had the chance to create our very own mini books. The process was a bit challenging at times, but it was also incredibly rewarding and so much fun! We learned new techniques, shared laughs, and left with our own little handmade treasures. A big thank you to Shona for leading such a creative and inspiring session!

Shona has some more fantastic crafting workshops lined up, happening every fortnight on Tuesdays at 1pm. For just \$20, you'll get all the materials you need to join in, plus a small koha for Shona to show appreciation for her time and expertise. Whether you're an experienced crafter or a complete beginner, everyone is welcome to join the sessions!

To find out when the next workshop is scheduled, be sure to check in with Nicki in the office. Don't miss out on the chance to unleash your creativity and make something special!



MEN'S BREAKFAST

Our latest men's breakfast was another great success! Held on Sunday 14 September, just before the morning church service, it was the perfect start to the day. As always, there was plenty of good food, and plenty of lively conversation. The rugby test was a hot topic, with everyone sharing their thoughts and opinions on the game, while a few other “pressing world problems” made their way into the discussion too — it’s amazing how a hearty breakfast can spark such lively debates!

It was a wonderful chance for the men in the community to connect, share a laugh, and enjoy some time together. A big thanks to everyone who came along and made it such a fun and engaging morning.



POTLUCK DINNER & QUIZ NIGHT

There was plenty of delicious food to enjoy and a great mix of interesting quiz questions that really made us think! It was a fun and engaging evening on Sunday, 3 August — full of laughter, teamwork, and tasty treats!



LIME CHEESECAKE RECIPE

MARGIE THOMSON

BASE

Crush 1 pkt malt thins and mix with 4 oz melted butter and ½ c castor sugar
Press into base of tin and refrigerate

TOP

Cream 1 pkt Philadelphia Cheese and ½ cup castor sugar
Add 1 lime jelly to 1 cup boiling water. Beat together with cheese
Add ½ pint whipped cream and beat till smooth. Pour into biscuit base and chill till set.

I change the colour of the jelly depending on what fruit you garnish it with.

ANIMAL BLESSING SERVICE

Rain couldn't dampen the spirits of those who joined us for the Animal Blessing on Sunday 5 October. Originally planned for the Ngatea Community Garden, we quickly moved indoors to the hall, and the event went ahead smoothly.

The special Animal Blessing Service brought together a wonderful mix of animals and their owners for a meaningful ceremony. Despite the change in location, it was a beautiful moment of connection, with wagging tails and little lambs receiving blessings in the warm community atmosphere.

Thanks to everyone and their pets for making it such a joyful and memorable occasion!



WORLD VISION CHILD SPONSORSHIP

Hauraki Plains Co-Operating Parish sponsors a young girl through World Vision. Her name is Nwae Zin Linn and she is 9 years old. She lives in Paung, Myanmar.

Our support makes sure Nwae, her family and community can get access to medical help, and they are also taught how to start their own businesses so they can have a good income to support the families and community in Paung.



Thank you for helping my community, Paung



"Thank you for your valuable support. You are helping to improve children's well-being and strengthen families' resilience to any challenges that might come."

Moe Thet Htoo
Paung Community Manager

You're making a life-changing impact

100%

of community health workers and volunteers completed prenatal and postnatal training and are now caring for pregnant women and newborns, helping more mums and babies stay healthy.

100%

of farmers are putting their new sustainable agriculture skills into practice, securing their farming resources and income for the long term so they can provide for their children.

Myanmar vs New Zealand Source: UNDP, UNICEF, and World Bank, 2022; WHO, 2024

Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 births)	Average years at school	Gross national income per person
 41.8	 6.4	 \$3,851
 4.7	 12.9	 \$44,057

Thank you for sponsoring me



Watch my update video

I'm now nine years old.

Currently, I'm in primary school studying grade three.

School grading systems differ globally. For example, sometimes children might stay in the same grade or skip a grade.

World Vision staff are monitoring my well-being. Currently my health is good.

This year me and my family participated in and benefitted from:

-  **Mosquito nets**
I am safer from diseases spread by mosquitoes, now that I have a new mosquito net.
-  **Food and groceries**
I received food and grocery items to support my nutrition and health.
-  **Hygiene workshop**
I practise good hygiene like hand washing.
-  **Child marriage prevention training**
We are now more aware of the need to protect our children from marrying too young.
-  **Child rights workshop**
Better understanding of children's rights is leading us to make positive changes for children in the community.

NGATEA COMMUNITY PANTRY – CHRISTMAS FOODBANK APPEAL

This Christmas, the Ngatea Community Pantry is collecting for our Annual Foodbank Appeal.

Like many community organisations, we're finding that demand for support continues to rise – especially over the past few months, when we've already helped far more families than this time last year. At the same time, the cost of food has gone up sharply, even for simple items that we include in our food parcels.



We would be so grateful for any donations to help us restock and support local whānau this holiday season.

Most needed items include:

- 🥫 Canned food and pantry staples – cereal, rice, pasta, tea, coffee, sugar
- 🧴 Hygiene items – pads, shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, deodorant
- 👶 Baby essentials – nappies, wipes, formula
- 🐾 Pet food – for both cats and dogs

Every donation, big or small, makes an immediate and meaningful difference for people in our community who are doing it tough this Christmas.

Please drop off any donations to the Hauraki Plains Cooperating Parish, 3 Darlington Street, Ngatea, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays between 9:30 am and 3:30 pm.

Thank you for helping spread kindness and food this holiday season. ❤️

THE FOUR SUNDAYS OF ADVENT: A SEASON OF HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE

As we prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of Christ's birth, the season of Advent invites us into a time of reflection, anticipation, and spiritual growth.

Each of the four Sundays of Advent has its own unique focus, symbolized by the lighting of candles on the Advent wreath. These candles represent key themes of Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The Advent wreath itself, typically a circular wreath of evergreens, symbolizes eternity and the unending love of God. Below, we explore the meaning of each Sunday and its candle:

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: THE CANDLE OF HOPE (THE PROPHECY CANDLE)

The first Sunday of Advent focuses on Hope, symbolized by the purple candle, which is also called the Prophecy Candle. This candle serves as a reminder of the prophets, particularly Isaiah, who foretold the coming of the Messiah. The color purple represents royalty and repentance, as we prepare our hearts for the arrival of Christ the King.

In this first week, we reflect on the hope that Jesus' birth brings to the world. We anticipate the fulfillment of God's promises, trusting in His faithfulness. This is a time to renew our sense of hope, not only in Christ's first coming but also in His return in glory.

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: THE CANDLE OF PEACE (THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE)

The second Sunday of Advent is focused on Peace, symbolized by the second purple candle, known as the Bethlehem Candle. This candle reminds us of the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, where they prepared to welcome the birth of Jesus. It reflects the peace that Jesus brings into the world, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

As we light this candle, we are invited to reflect on the peace that Jesus offers—peace in our hearts, peace in our relationships, and peace in the world. This Sunday encourages us to make room in our lives for peace, just as there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. How can we make room for the peace of Christ in our lives?

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: THE CANDLE OF JOY (THE SHEPHERD'S CANDLE)

The third Sunday of Advent is often referred to as Gaudete Sunday, or "Rejoice Sunday," and is symbolized by the Pink Candle. The color pink is a sign of joy and marks a moment of anticipation and celebration as we approach the coming of Christ.

This Sunday emphasizes Joy—the joy that the birth of Christ brings to the world. We remember the message of the angels to the shepherds: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people" (Luke 2:10). This Sunday encourages us to embrace the joy of Christ's coming, even in the midst of life's challenges.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: THE CANDLE OF LOVE (THE ANGEL'S CANDLE)

The fourth Sunday of Advent is focused on Love, symbolized by the final purple candle, known as the Angel's Candle. This candle represents the love that God has shown to the world through the gift of His Son. It reminds us that the true meaning of Christmas is the love that Christ embodies.

On this Sunday, we reflect on the depth of God's love for humanity and how we are called to share that love with others. The angel's message to Mary and the world was one of love and grace—God's love made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. As we light the final candle, we are called to let Christ's love transform us and be reflected in our actions.

THE ADVENT WREATH: A SYMBOL OF CHRIST'S COMING

The Advent wreath, typically placed at the center of worship during Advent, serves as a powerful symbol of the journey toward Christmas. Each week, one additional candle is lit, increasing the light and brightness in the sanctuary, reminding us that Christ is the Light of the World. The four candles represent the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, while the central white candle—often lit on Christmas Eve—represents the birth of Jesus, the Light that has come into the darkness of the world.

In addition to the candles, the evergreens of the wreath symbolize eternal life, reminding us that Jesus' coming is not just a historical event but an ongoing promise of God's presence in our lives.

Let this Advent season be a time of renewal, as we wait together in expectation for the coming of our Savior, the Light of the World. May the themes of Advent—hope, peace, joy, and love—guide our lives as we celebrate His birth and await His return.

Blessings to you and your family this Advent season!



UPCOMING EVENTS




KEREPEHI BRASS BAND
Christmas Concert
SATURDAY 6 DECEMBER
7PM
St George's Anglican Church,
602 MacKay Street, Thames
ADMISSION
Adults - \$15, School Children - \$5
Under 5s Free
Tickets available at the door or www.eventbrite.co.nz
WWW.KEREPEHIBRASS.CO.NZ 



Hauraki Plains Community
Christmas PARADE
THE EVENT OF THE YEAR
11th DEC
Time: 5:45pm (First Float) - 7:30pm
Location: Ngatea Main Street
Cost: Free!!!
Theme: "Around The World"
Categories: -Children/School
-Business
-Clubs
-Overall Winner
Entertainment Afterwards!
Bring the family, bring the fun,
it's free to enter for everyone
Hauraki District Council Support By:



Ngatea Christmas Market,
come and experience a magical
market
Kids rides, fairys, entertainment, all your Xmas
shopping in one place, with a huge array of craft
stalls farmers market stalls plus food tucks
December the 14th
9.30 till 2pm
For stall bookings: please email
ngateamarket@gmail.com
Phone: 0212274203



You're invited to
Pray HAURAKI
AN EVENING OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER
FOR OUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

HPC MUSIC ROOM **11 DECEMBER 7-9PM**
Supper to follow
Access the music room by the driveway before the school
noticeboard (off SHWY 2)

CAKE STALL

Saturday 18 October, brought a wonderful start to the weekend with our Garage Day Cake Stall, and what a lovely morning it was!

A huge thank you to everyone who baked, volunteered, and supported the stall by purchasing some of the yummy goodies. Your generosity and support mean so much to us,

and the funds raised will go directly toward supporting the ongoing work and ministry of the church. It's always heartwarming to see our community come together, and this cake stall was no exception!



UPCOMING SERVICES

- Sunday 7 December - 9.30am - Rev Phil Bettany - Children's Service
 - Sunday 14 December - 9.30am - Rev Phil Bettany
 - Sunday 21 December - 9.30am - Rev Phil Bettany - Communion
 - Thursday 25 December - 9.30am - Rev Phil Bettany - Christmas Day
 - Sunday 28 December - 9.30am - Worship Team
 - Sunday 4 January - 9.30am - Rev Phil Bettany - Communion
 - Sunday 11 January - 9.30am - Rev Phil Bettany
 - Sunday 18 January - 9.30am - Worship Team - Communion
 - Sunday 25 January - 9.30am - Worship Team
-

HAURAKI PLAINS CO-OPERATING PARISH

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Church Office: Tuesday, Thursday & Fridays 9.30am - 3.30pm