



Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church

Minister: Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

June 2026 NEWSLETTER



Messy Church 31st May 2026

Check out our new website www.bayspc.nz

UPDATE FROM TOKERAU

Why are we part of Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church? Why would we want others to belong and participate in church life here with us? What do we offer them? These have been some questions I've asked myself and wrestled with since taking our Revitalise journey.

People may come to church for a variety of reasons. Perhaps it's primarily to worship, connect with a community, and grow spiritually.

To pray, sing, and feel closer to God through shared scripture, music, and sacraments can encourage people's Christian faith. To build friendships, support others through life's challenges and growing a sense of belonging can contribute to community and fellowship. Christian teachings that can offer moral direction and help people live out their faith can also be appreciated. Perhaps keeping certain traditions, observing cultural/religious rites, and regular practices provides comfort of familiarity and stability.

But do these (and obviously other things) reflect our purpose as Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church? Do we even know or think about why we do what we do as a church?

I find it interesting that the last three points above could be acceptable to non-believers or atheists for connecting with church. Belonging to a church without believing in God is surprisingly common. People can do this for community connection, cultural heritage, moral support, or appreciation of ritual. It highlights that religion is not just about theological belief, but also about shared human experiences and traditions. I suspect many people belong first in the church before they believe in God.

Yet, being part of the church is ultimately about being connected to and grounded in God by faith in Christ and enabled through the Holy Spirit. Both a Christological and Trinitarian view of the church affirms our connectedness in Christ and to the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God. Therefore, coming to, growing in, and exercising Christian faith is fundamental to belonging to the community of faith.

As part of our continuing Revitalise Journey, our focus for the next year is to "Develop programs encouraging the continual growth in Christian discipleship of church members." Inspiring faith, strengthening fellowship, and equipping them for service in and through the church to the wider community is integral to our life and growth. Reaching out to new folk and connecting them into the church is important. Developing their discipleship to do the same for others is just as significant.

This requires us to be very intentional and clear on how we do it. We can't afford to develop the discipleship of our members in an ad hoc or careless way.

Instead, we are urged to carefully consider and implement ways to grow areas such as Christian education for our children/youth, home groups, personal devotional life, leadership opportunities, and pastoral care. Most of these are already in place but having clarity about how they work and how they can be enhanced will be most beneficial. All of these, as well as others, can further shape our Christian service within and out of the church.

So, please pray that we may gain wisdom and courage to grow our church in this way moving forward. Please also take the time to reflect on your own discipleship and how your faith and service can be inspired, nurtured, and exercised to the glory of God. This is what we're about.

Tokerau

Welcome to Amelia - our Family and Community Enabler

Members will recall that thanks to assistance from a Northern Presbytery Mission Fund grant we were able to advertise to employ someone to work part time to assist us in growing our ministry within the community as well as encouraging young families to join our church. We are pleased to advise that Amelia Fan has been appointed to the position and will start on 2nd of June.

Amelia lives here in the Bays with husband Key and sons Jack and Paxton. She is a Christian and will be joining our church. Amelia is known to us through past involvement in our English Conversations Group, helping at Dees and together with the family at our Family Games and shared meal evening.



Amelia's links into the community include working as a volunteer at Scouts and with Murrays Bay Primary PTA. We are delighted to have Amelia join us.

Words From KAREL – Is God Violent?

Recently I visited a church other than my own. The service began with two singers on the stage singing: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

The line was repeated again and again. Behind the singers, projected on a large screen, were graphic and violent images of the crucifixion: bloodied flesh, nails, and thorns. I found myself increasingly uneasy. Is this really the heart of the Christian faith? Is God a deity who demands blood before God can forgive? Is God violent?

The answer depends very much on how we understand the meaning of Jesus’ death. The New Testament contains a variety of images to describe the significance of Jesus’ death. Some speak of sacrifice, some of reconciliation, some of liberation, and some of victory over the powers of evil. The early Christians did not settle on a single explanation.

For the first thousand years of Christianity, the dominant understanding was often called the “Christus Victor” model. In this view, Jesus enters fully into the human condition, confronts the powers of sin and death, and triumphs over them through resurrection. The emphasis is not on God requiring punishment, but on God overcoming the forces that enslave humanity.

Augustine of Hippo (CE354-430) profoundly shaped Western Christianity. Augustine stressed the seriousness of sin and the inability of human beings to save themselves. Because of original sin, humanity is alienated from God and dependent on divine grace. Augustine did not formulate the later theory that God needed to punish Jesus instead of us. Nevertheless, his strong emphasis on inherited guilt and human depravity laid the groundwork for later developments. If humanity is deeply corrupted and incapable of restoring its relationship with God, then some decisive divine intervention becomes necessary.

The major shift came with Anselm of Canterbury (CE1093-1108). Anselm lived in a feudal society in which honour was a central concept. In his influential book *Cur Deus Homo?* (“Why Did God Become Human?”), he argued that human sin dishonours God. Because God’s honour is infinite, humanity owes an infinite debt. Human beings cannot repay it, but God cannot simply overlook the offence. Therefore, God becomes human in Jesus Christ and offers his life as satisfaction. Anselm’s model was more juridical than relational. It portrayed salvation as the settlement of a debt. Although not as violent as some later theories, it introduced the idea that something had to be paid before forgiveness could be granted.

The Protestant Reformers built on Anselm but sharpened the logic.

Martin Luther (CE1483-1546) emphasized the depth of human sin and the experience of standing condemned before God. Jesus bears the curse and judgment that rightly belongs to humanity. John Calvin (CE1509-1564)

developed this into what became known as “penal substitution.” According to this theory, God’s justice requires punishment for sin. Jesus takes that punishment in our place, satisfying divine wrath. This interpretation has brought comfort to many Christians. Yet it also raises troubling questions. If God is love, why does God require violent punishment before forgiving? Does God demand the suffering of an innocent victim? If human fathers behaved in this way, we would rightly question their character.

In some modern evangelical and Pentecostal circles, this theology has been amplified even further. The language of “the blood” can become central, repeated with great emotional force. The cross is presented as the place where God vents wrath upon Jesus so that believers can escape judgment. There is often genuine faith and devotion in these communities. Yet the imagery can be disturbing, especially when accompanied by graphic depictions of violence. It can suggest that the divine economy operates through retribution rather than compassion. For some people, particularly those who have experienced abuse, this portrayal can be spiritually damaging. It may imply that suffering is redemptive, or that violence is somehow endorsed by God.

Many contemporary theologians have challenged penal substitution as the dominant interpretation of Jesus’ death. Marcus Borg understood the cross not as a payment to satisfy God, but as the ultimate revelation of what happens when human systems of domination confront radical love. Jesus was executed because he challenged both religious and political powers. For Borg, the cross reveals two truths simultaneously: the depth of human resistance to God, and the depth of God’s unwavering love.

John Dominic Crossan saw the crucifixion as the inevitable consequence of Jesus’ nonviolent resistance to imperial power. Walter Wink emphasized Jesus’ victory over the “powers” through nonviolence. James Alison, drawing on René Girard, argued that the cross exposes humanity’s scapegoating mechanism. God is not the author of violence; humanity is. In these perspectives, God does not require blood. Rather, God in Christ enters into human violence and responds with forgiveness.

Is God Violent?

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

That prayer is not spoken by an angry deity demanding satisfaction, but by a suffering victim extending grace. The Bible contains violent images and stories. Christian theology has often reflected the assumptions of the cultures in which it developed—honour and debt in the Middle Ages, legal categories in the Reformation, emotional revivalism in modern evangelicalism. But theology is always an interpretation. It is not identical with God.

When I watched those images on the screen while hearing “Nothing but the blood of Jesus” repeated over and over, I wondered whether we have sometimes mistaken our theological metaphors for ultimate truth. Perhaps the

cross is not about appeasing divine anger. Perhaps it is about revealing divine solidarity with all who suffer, and divine love that refuses to retaliate.

A thoughtful friend recently wrote that many ideas developed throughout Christian history may need to be discarded. Better still, they may be composted—allowed to decompose and become fertilizer for new growth. That strikes me as a wise metaphor.

We need not despise the past. Augustine, Anselm, Luther, and Calvin were trying to make sense of the gospel within the intellectual frameworks available to them. Their work has shaped the Christian tradition profoundly. But not every inherited doctrine deserves permanent preservation. Some ideas still nourish faith. Others have become toxic. The task of theology is not to defend every concept handed down to us, but to discern what continues to reveal the God whom Jesus called Father. If an idea portrays God as less compassionate, less forgiving, and less loving than Jesus himself, perhaps it belongs on the compost heap. And if it cannot even serve as compost—if it only poisons the soil—then perhaps it belongs in the rubbish.

Karel

MEETING OF CONGREGATION OVER ACCESSWAY –

After the 10am Service on Sunday 7 June.

In the agreement with the Auckland Council for the purchase of the accessway from Penzance Road there is a requirement that we use all reasonable endeavours to reach an agreement that formalises the continued use of the accessway by the owners of numbers 8 and 10 (A and B) who currently use it.

We have met with the owners, and they wish to negotiate over purchasing individual easements from the church including meeting the costs of getting the easements. When we reach agreement with the neighbours, we will need to get the agreement of Presbytery and the Property Trustees.

The Church Property Trustees have a policy whereby a recent valuation is needed when land matters are being decided on. Three valuations of the accessway were undertaken back in 2020. They were all different and the neighbours did not agree with the second or the final ones. At our meeting the neighbours made it clear that they do not want another valuation. A further valuation will just take time and cost money. We also see no benefit in having it. We wish to approach the Church Property Trustees to allow us to proceed with the negotiation with the neighbours without obtaining a further valuation of the land.

A meeting of the congregation is being arranged for after the 10am Service on Sunday 7 June. At the meeting the Congregation will be asked to agree that an updated value of the accessway is not needed prior to the negotiation with the neighbours over their continued use and that this be recommended to the Trustees.

Stewart Milne



Update from Parish Council – April Meeting

Our May meeting of Church Council was opened with a heartfelt prayer by Grace Liu. We then covered pastoral matters with shared advice about those known of in our congregation and community who are unwell. We prayed for their recovery.

- Agreed to the proposal to hold a Workshop on the morning of Saturday 11 July which will be led by Rev Tim Loftis – the CTC Consultant who has been assisting us with our rejuvenation project. This will focus on Church Culture and be followed by Tim preaching on Sunday 12 July.
- Received a report from Stephen and Stewart on a meeting they had with the owners of 8 and 10 Penzance Road who are wanting to formalise their future access to their properties by way of easements. A meeting of the Congregation will be held on the matter of valuation of the land after the 10am service on Sunday 7 June. (See information elsewhere in this edition)
- Were able to see better news on the financial front with the church looking to break even for the year ending 30th June.
- Were advised by Alastair that he will donate the equipment that is needed for streaming church services. He is proceeding to install the equipment.
- Considered the Clerk's report on the goals that we had agreed for each quarter of year, one of our 5-year revitalizing project. Council generally appreciated the number of actions that have taken place or are under action, however there is disappointment that our membership is not increasing.
- Considered, amended and agreed the goal for year two which is "To develop programs encouraging the continual growth in discipleship in church members and further developing their spiritual understanding and Christian service.
- Agreed to offer the Family and Community Enabler position to Amelia Fan. See information about Amelia elsewhere in this Newsletter.
- Agreed in principle to a new structure for our committees to reflect the 3 important church systems of Outreach, Inclusion and Growth.
- Decided that the bookcase in the foyer should be for Christian and religious books, self-help books; some children's books and suitable novels
- Pointed out to the Clerk that when he sends a mass text and those contacted reply they incur a charge. He needs to use SMS. Note: even though his memory is fading, he should be able to remember the SM part!

Stewart



Manse Roof Maintenance **Clean and Paint**

We have just had the roof cleaned and painted at the Manse for the first time since we've owned it and it looks great, guaranteed for 15 years!

PRAYER OF THANKS

Grace Liu constituted the May meeting of Parish Council with the following prayer. It spoke to the hearts of those present who asked that it be shared to all via the Newsletter.

God, Thank you for the blessings of this life, for the moments of joy that lift my spirit, and for the quiet peace found in ordinary days.

I am grateful not only for the sunshine, but also for the storms, for they teach me strength, resilience and growth. Thank you for the hardships that keep me humble, and for the grace that carries me through.

Help me to love mindfully in the present, accepting this imperfect world as it is and trusting in your divine plan. May my heart always be a wellspring of thankfulness, recognizing the beauty in every soul I meet and the love that surrounds me each day

Amen

GROWING OUR CHURCH: SECOND YEAR GOAL TOGETHER WITH WHAT WE ARE TO ACHIEVE IN OUR FIRST 90 DAYS

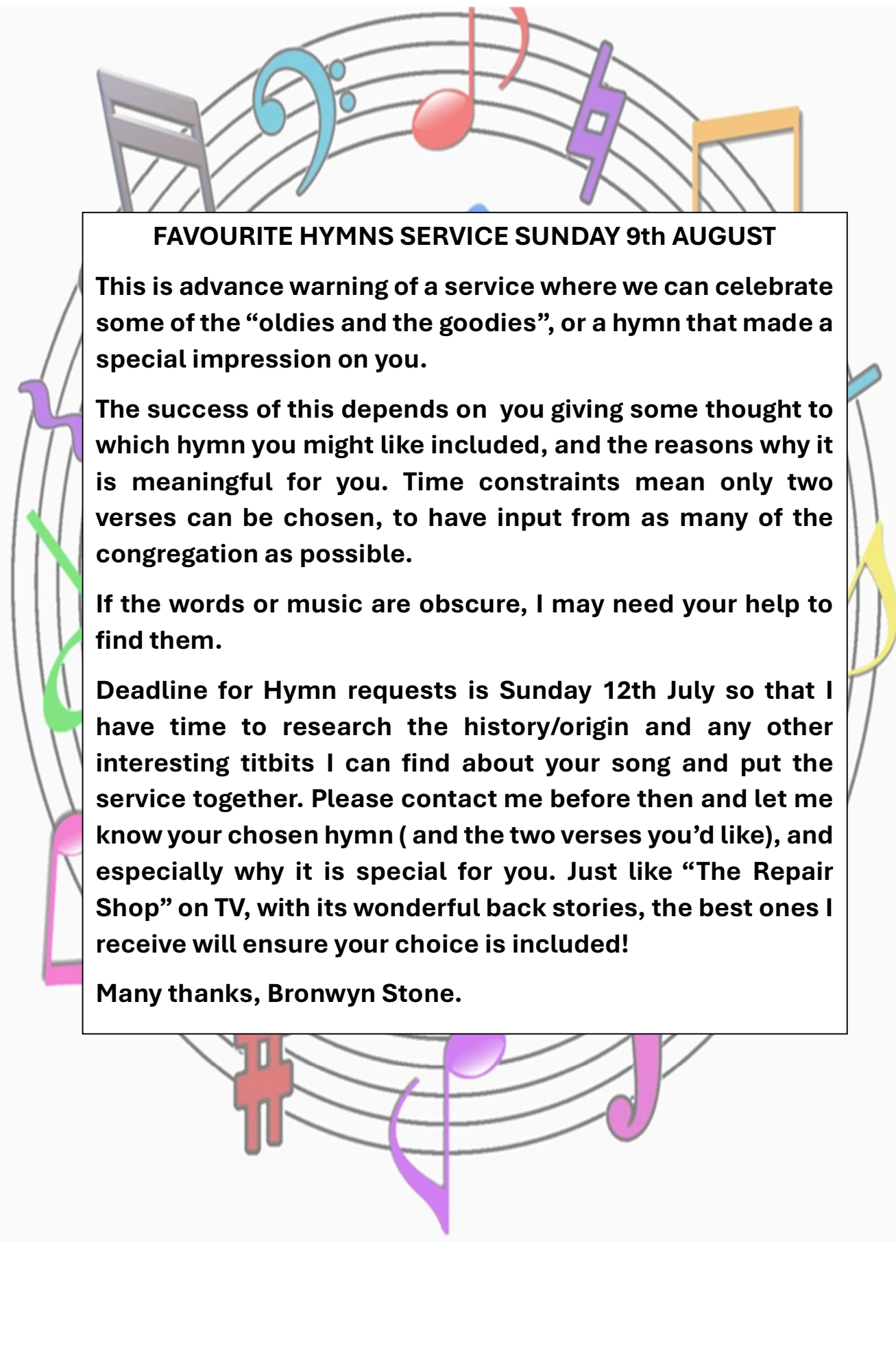
As mentioned in the report from our Church Council Meeting, we now have an approved Year 2 Goal and 4 goals for the first 90days of year 2. Here they are:

Develop programs encouraging the continual growth in Christian discipleship of church members.

1-year goal

<u>Personal devotional life</u>	<u>Pastoral</u>	<u>Christian Education/Homegroups</u>	<u>Service development</u>
Parish Council to pray, explore, and develop a strategy for encouraging the personal devotional life of church members	The pastoral team to pray, explore, and develop a strategy for enhancing pastoral visiting and care to church members, those on the pastoral roll, and in the wider community	The Christian Ed committee to pray, explore, and develop a strategy to grow home groups and the Christian learning of our children/youth and members	Parish Council to pray, discern, and implement pathways for how church members can serve in the church

First 90-days

A decorative background featuring a musical staff with various notes and symbols. At the top, there is a treble clef, a blue bass clef, a red eighth note, a purple eighth note, and an orange square. Below the staff, there are green and yellow wavy lines. At the bottom, there is a red sharp symbol and a purple eighth note.

FAVOURITE HYMNS SERVICE SUNDAY 9th AUGUST

This is advance warning of a service where we can celebrate some of the “oldies and the goodies”, or a hymn that made a special impression on you.

The success of this depends on you giving some thought to which hymn you might like included, and the reasons why it is meaningful for you. Time constraints mean only two verses can be chosen, to have input from as many of the congregation as possible.

If the words or music are obscure, I may need your help to find them.

Deadline for Hymn requests is Sunday 12th July so that I have time to research the history/origin and any other interesting titbits I can find about your song and put the service together. Please contact me before then and let me know your chosen hymn (and the two verses you’d like), and especially why it is special for you. Just like “The Repair Shop” on TV, with its wonderful back stories, the best ones I receive will ensure your choice is included!

Many thanks, Bronwyn Stone.



Mothers Day Morning tea

A huge “Thank You” to our women’s fellowship for the yummy food provided for the “Special Mother’s Day morning tea” fundraiser for Breast Cancer and to everyone that donated.

We raised \$249.00.

Thank you, *Karen*

Church Library Book donations

We are now working towards the second year of our revitalisation. One of the goals is to encourage the personal devotional life of church members so we would like to build a resource library for our bookcase in the foyer.

Lets share the faith with pre-loved books for children, teens and adults with Christian or other religious content and self-help books. General fiction and non-fiction will also be accepted if they are suitable for a church library.



Guess Who's Coming to Lunch June 21st

Come and join us for Guess Who's Coming to Lunch. Yvonne Ambler is co-ordinating it on June 21st. 0211681881. She would like to know who can host and who would like to be guests.

Mairangi Bay Presbyterian Church Weekly & Monthly Activities

 **Sunday Service** 10am Sundays – Rev Dr Tokerau Joseph

 027 371 4733 |  tokerau.j@gmail.com

 **Seniors Social Group** 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month, 10am–12pm

Carole 021 0235 7398 | Raewyn 027 733 7612

 **English Conversations** Mon 1–2.30pm – Meeting Room 1 & 2

Stewart 478 5786 | Grace 021 048 7978 | John 021 108 7700

 **House Group** Wed, 3pm at Shadbolt's – Dorille 479 3953

 **Dee's Social Group** Thurs, 10am–2pm – Church Hall

Tangi 022 657 3223

 **Mainly Music** Fri (school term only), 10–11am – Church Hall

Karen 021 0226 3846

 **Family Fun Night** 2nd Friday of the month, 6.15pm – Church Hall

Tangi 022 657 3223 | Stewart 027 293 8499

 **Men's Group Lunch** 2nd Tuesday of the month, 12pm – The Bays Club

Ian 027 332 7235

 **Leader for the Young** Angelika 027 310 3284

 **Parish Council** 3rd Tues, 7.30pm – Meeting Room 2

Stewart 027 293 8499 | 09 478 5786

 **Office Hours** Wed & Fri 9–1pm | Tues–Fri 9–1pm 

office@bayspc.nz |  09 478 6180 / 021 055 1640

 Please send any Parish photos to **office@bayspc.nz**