

St John's *Today*



Beginnings within Endings:
Advent, Transition and Hope.

SUMMER 2025/26

**Quarterly magazine for the
Anglican Parish of St John**

Old St John's, Te Awamutu
St John's, Te Awamutu
St Paul's, Rangiaowhia
St Saviours, Pirongia
Christ Church, Kihikihi

**If undelivered return to:
162 Arawata St, Te Awamutu 3800
or let the office know
if you no longer wish to receive
this magazine - Ph. 871-5568**

In remembrance:

JEFFREY KNOX

Please advise the Parish Office on 871-5568 of any illness, hospital admissions or prayer requests of parishioners for noting by our Pastoral Care Team.

Prayer Chain:

If you need someone to pray for you regularly, or if you know of someone who is sick and needs prayer, please remember the Prayer Chain is here to journey with you and in confidence.

Phone Steve Anso 871-6273 or the Parish Office.

Counting Blessings: Gratitude Practices for Spring

As spring unfolds across Te Awamutu, our town is coming alive with colour and energy. The Rose Gardens are in bloom, the summer sports season has begun, and our young people are preparing for school exams -we and their teachers hope!) It's a season that naturally invites us to pause and count our blessings.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus painted a picture of a way of seeing the world that was radically different for the times. "Look at the birds of the air," he said, "they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." He was teaching gratitude as a way of life, a lens through which to view everything we have.

Living into gratitude is about how we story our lives. When we tell ourselves we have much rather than little, something profound shifts. The narrative of scarcity—"there's never enough, I must hold on to what I have tightly"—gives way to a story of abundance. And from abundance flows generosity. We share what we have, rather than grasp tightly, afraid of running out.

Walking through our parks and gardens, we are surrounded by creation's annual miracle of rebirth. Each blossom and new leaf reminds us of God's faithful provision, the cycles that sustain life. However, gratitude involves more than appreciating beauty from a distance—it's about recognising our place within creation and our responsibility to nurture it. Across Europe and England, churches are discovering innovative ways to express gratitude through action. Many congregations are leaving their grounds unmowed during spring and summer, allowing wildflowers to flourish and insects to feed on pollen and nectar. What might seem like neglect is actually profound care—creating sanctuaries for declining bee and butterfly populations.

creating safe passageways for small creatures moving between woodlands. These "wildlife corridors" demonstrate that gratitude for creation leads naturally to stewardship. When we're truly thankful for what we've been given, we hold it with open hands. Where/how might the parish of St John be able to contribute in a similar way? Here in Waipa, we have our own wildlife corridor being developed- Taiea te Taiao, the Ecological Corridor following the Mangapiko, from Maungatautari to Pirongia. Many are involved, working together to benefit our waterways and wildlife. This work is driven by a sense of gratitude for the beauty of our environment and desire to see it preserved for those who follow us. Where/how might the parish of St John be able to contribute either to this work or in a similar way?

Jesus's teaching challenges us: how do we story our lives? Do we focus on what we lack, breeding anxiety and fear? Or do we count our blessings, recognising abundance, and find ourselves able to give freely?

As we move through this spring season, perhaps we might adopt some simple gratitude practices. Like those creating wildlife corridors, we can ask: how might our thankfulness translate into connection, protection, and care? How might we change our own story and that of our parish?

Spring reminds us that our triune God has built generosity into His creation's design. Everything connected, part of the cycle, part of God's abundant story—a story we're invited to join.

Rev'd Julie Guest

Christmas is for giving
And for showing that we care,
For honouring the Christ Child
With the loving gifts we share.
The wisemen gave of riches;
The shepherds, faith and love.
Each gift, in its own measure,
Was smiled on from above.



- Iris W Bray

A God Who Reveals Himself Through Change

When I sat down to begin writing my Masters thesis, the first topic that came to mind was “identity in Christ”. I grew up with the phrase, “our identity is in Christ” used often to describe how we should see ourselves in the world; that all other aspects of our identity came secondary to being in Christ. To back this up, if you read through Ephesians and note every time the phrase “in Christ” or something to that effect is used you will end up with more than 30 references. If you go into the YouVersion Bible app and look through the devotions they have on offer “in Christ” studies are often right at the top. Although this phrase is used so often, especially in Evangelical circles (in which I grew up in), very rarely is it ever explained. What does it mean to be “in Christ”?

The way that we talk about ourselves and others very quickly determines how we view ourselves and the world. Identity language is often used as static, unchanging, unmoving. There are aspects of our identity that do not change, for instance, I was born the first-born son of an immigrant mother. This deeply shapes my identity and never changes. However, my mother, who once identified as a Mennonite Canadian, now has lived the majority of her life in New Zealand / Aotearoa and so would identify as a Mennonite New Zealander much more readily. So, there are aspects of our identity that do not change, but there are also aspects that do continue to change. Our world is an ever-changing place, we, as creatures on this earth, are ever-changing people and so our identity will be ever-changing as well. Since we are ever-changing or dynamic, our understanding of who we see ourselves as and how we see the world should continue to change with us. As we learn more about who Jesus is, and how Jesus calls us to interact within the world, our understanding of Jesus changes. We could say that the truth I know today, will not be the truth I know tomorrow, because I will have a deeper understanding then.

God does not change; God journeys with us and reveals himself to us through the Holy Spirit over time. The story of the Old Testament

is a story of God's continual revealing of himself, over time, leading up to the ultimate revelation of God in the birth of Jesus, God's Son. What continues to challenge me is that the people who were meant to know God best, the people who were meant to guide the people in their relationship with God could not see Jesus because of their static view of God, and the hope that God was calling them to. The Pharisees, as were most Israelites, were waiting for a triumphant and violent king to rise up within Israel who would lead them in battle against Rome, throwing off their oppressors and reinstating a Golden Era of Israelite power. Jesus did not come as an earthly ruler, Jesus came as the humble son of a carpenter from a backwater village. And Jesus came not to raise Israel up as a superpower, but to raise up **all** who are oppressed and marginalised, establishing the Kingdom of God here on earth - a place of flourishing for **all** creation.

A place of flourishing for all creation is a far stretch from a global superpower nation. I wonder how our view of being "in Christ" might have changed over the course of our lifetime. In Te Awamutu, we are in a time of explicit change, it is the end of an era with one Vicar (Rev'd Julie) and we look at what it might be like with a new Vicar. As things change, and as we change, we recognise that God has a plan and God gives us a hope; a hope to see all creation flourish through the working of the Spirit of Jesus in us. I am being Priested in the next week, this is going to be a huge change both for me and for my family. It is a time of uncertainty which can also be laced with fear of how things might change. For me, though, being "in Christ" means that I am never alone. I have the same Spirit in me, that is in Jesus, and I have been brought into the love and life of the Triune God. I do not take God with me into the places I go, journey into all places, knowing that God is already there by the Spirit. This gives me hope. Hope that everything does not rest on my shoulders, hope that God knows what God is doing, hope that in the end all will be well.

As we enter this Advent season, with all the change that is afoot, may we do so knowing that we are created for change, for transition. May we be open to all the ways God might be wanting to reveal himself to us in new and different ways. May our love for

God, for ourselves, for others and for the world only grow as we enter into the hope we have in Christ.

Rev'd Sam Pullenger

The sermons in recent weeks have drawn lovely pictures in my mind. And a question—"How would I have reacted if I had been there at those times"?

Of course I cannot answer that with any actual experience; as a woman I may not have been in the crowd to observe the events. So when I get home I think about what my reaction is as I listen to it all in the "here and now". That is the beginning of a lot of internal discussion with the interpretation of the situation.

I would like to think that as a follower of Jesus I would support Him. Would we women have gathered together for mutual support? By contrast I am able to express my belief publicly, so can wear my cross without fear of public reaction (legal or private).

So in the Advent theme of Transition and Hope, I believe that God will be supporting me through the current of transitions of the season of Advent, with my hope being that I can live the life He has ordained for me.

Merle Oliver

Politics As The Outworking Of Conviction

How we can bring light & joy to our communities

Christmastime is (in the words of Dickens) one of the only times in the year where people see each other as fellow human beings, regardless of class or creed, race or religion, sex or sexuality. It's the one time where almost every person greets another with joy and goodwill - but as Christians we're called to do that every day, all year long.

In November I was invited to speak to the Men's Breakfast about the intersection of politics and faith - I've been involved in politics behind-the-scenes since I was a teenager (working for MPs, working on policy, running campaigns etc), long before I came to

Christ. But since coming to faith my political outlook has changed, how I believe we should engage in politics and respond to ideological differences has also changed. Politics at its core is simply the act of engaging in civic matters (stemming from the Greek *polis*). It isn't just voting once every three years, but living out our values each and every day.

When we think about Christmas we are perhaps most inclined to envision the newborn babe in the manger, but if we zoom out a little we see the consternation that the birth of Jesus caused among the leaders of the day. From the very day of His birth, Christ presented a challenge to the ways of the world.

He healed on the Sabbath, He sat with the marginalized, He brought comfort to those society despised, He flouted the rules of the Pharisees, and He called out sin but walked in love. In 1971, Billy Graham described it thus: "He lifted man's ethics to the highest plane and demanded that we live that kind of a life".

So what would our politics, our society, and our community look like if we lived like Jesus?

Care for the needy. Give to the poor. Look after the vulnerable. Respect all forms of life. Be good neighbours. Do not hoard wealth. Honour creation. Love God. Love mankind.

These are our Christian values, but in today's world they are also inherently political. So living a life like Christ is a political act.

The Church (and we as its body) cannot absent itself from politics because the very act of following Christ, caring for the vulnerable, radiating love, and standing strongly for morality, dignity and justice are what we have been called to.

As we light our Advent Wreath, with its candles symbolizing love, hope, peace and joy, we should consider how we can live out each of those values in our homes, workplaces, and community this festive season.

Let us be like Dicken's Ghost of Christmas Past and glow so brightly that nothing can extinguish our light - the light that comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke East

TRANSITION and HOPE

It seems we are living in a time of great transition than many of us have experienced before.

Being at the bottom of the world, Aotearoa New Zealand was sheltered from a lot of what was happening elsewhere, although we catch up with it eventually.

As individuals we all have our own transitions—or reactions to what is happening to us, and we expect that “it will all come right in the end”.

That is HOPE, although we do not think of that word at the time.

As Christians we have prayers to help us get to the end safely or satisfactorily.

We all hope for peace in our lives and in the world. Do we do our own part to bring this about?

Loving our neighbour as ourselves is not an easy challenge at times but we must make the effort to live up to our Saviour's instruction—all those years ago.

The Orakau parish is going through a period of transition so needs our prayers and support.

Merle Oliver



Twas The (Politically Correct) Night Before Christmas

“Twas the night before Christmas and Santa’s a wreck...

How to live in a world that’s politically correct?

His workers no longer would answer to “Elves”

“Vertically Challenged” they were

calling themselves.

And labour conditions at the north pole

Were alleged by the union to stifle the soul.

Four reindeers had vanished, without much prop

Released to the wilds by the Humane Society.

And equal employment had made it quite clear

That Santa had better not use just reindeer.

So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid,

were replaced with four pigs, and you know that
looked stupid.



Second-hand smoke from his pipe had his workers quite frightened.
His fur trimmed read suit was called “Unenlightened.”

And to show you the strangeness of life’s ebbs and flows,

Rudolf was suing over unauthorised use of his nose and had gone
on Fair Go, in front of the nation,

Demanding millions in compensation.

So, half of the reindeers were gone; and his wife.

Who suddenly said she’d enough of this life,

Joined a self-help group, packed, and left in a whiz,

Demanding from now on her title was Ms.

And as for the gifts, why, he’d ne’er had a notion

That making a choice could cause such commotion.

Nothing of leather, nothing of fur,

Which meant nothing for him, and nothing for her.

Nothing that might be construed to pollute.

Nothing to aim. Nothing to shoot.

Nothing that clamoured or made lots of noise.

Nothing for just girls. Or just for the boys.

Nothing that claimed to be gender specific.
Nothing that's warlike or non-pacific.

No candy or sweets...they were bad for the tooth.
Nothing that seemed to embellish a truth.
A fairy tales, while not yet forbidden.
Were like Ken and Barbie, better of hidden.
For they raised the hackles of those psychological
Who claimed the only good gift was one ecological.

No baseball, no football...someone could get hurt;
Besides, playing sports, exposed kids to dirt.
Dolls were said to be sexist, and should be passe:
And Nintendo would rot your entire brain away.

So Santa just stood there, dishevelled, perplexed:
He just could not figure out what to do next.
He tried to be merry, tried to be gay,
You've got to be careful with that word today.
His sack was quite empty, limp to the ground;
Nothing fully acceptable was to be found.

Something special was needed, a gift that he might
Give to all without giving anger to left or to right.
A gift that would satisfy, with no indecision,
Each group of people, every religion;
Every ethnicity, every hue,
Everyone, everywhere...even you.

So here's that gift, it's price beyond worth...
"May you and your loved ones enjoy peace of earth."



Collection Plate

One of my friends in New York assures me, though I must not take him too seriously, that a new kind of collection plate is in use in some of America's most go-ahead churches.

Along comes a quiet-looking church office holding what looks like a harmless plate. If a member drops a dollar in the plate there's not a sound. If he pops in a quarter, a bell rings. For a dime or a nickel, a whistle blows. And for the crafty person who extends his hand and pretends to contribute, there's a scream, a flash, and the artful dodger's photo is snapped!

Of course, my friend may be pulling my leg....

By Francis Gay 1967

Jill Webber



Defragging December: Finding Stillness in Advent

In "*Do Nothing, Christmas is Coming*," Bishop Stephen Cottrell writes:

People who know about computers tell me that they need to be defragged on a regular basis. I don't really know what "defragged" really means – I am to computer technology what King Herod was to child-minding – but it is something to do with reversing the fragmentation that takes place when computers store different bits of a document in different places on the hard drive. Every time the file is accessed the computer has to search the hard drive to gather

all the pieces together. This causes computers to slow down and crash.

Defragging the computer prevents this problem by rearranging the broken-up parts of the file and putting them close together on the hard drive, thus increasing speed and performance. Once you've finished defragging you can reboot and start afresh.

What's all this got to do with Christmas, I hear you say? Well, life needs defragmenting too. Life needs rebooting and Christmas is the time when you're most likely to notice the problem. There are so many different programmes running at once. So many plates spinning, the different bits of our lives are running in different directions...

It might be the season of goodwill but it feels like the last straw on an already overburdened camel. Wise men would not ride this one."

Bishop Cottrell's wisdom strikes at the heart of our December dilemma. We've fragmented Advent into a blur of obligations, each pulling us in different directions—shopping lists competing with carol services, party planning conflicting with prayer time. But isn't the very purpose of this season is to reverse that fragmentation? Advent calls us to something countercultural: stillness. Not the stillness of exhaustion after we've collapsed from doing too much, but the intentional stillness of watching and waiting. The kind Mary practiced when she pondered things in her heart. The kind the shepherds experienced on that hillside before the angels appeared—ordinary men doing ordinary work, present to the moment.

Has our culture has lost the art of anticipation? We binge-watch entire series in weekends. We skip to the last page of the book. We count down to Christmas while playing Christmas music in November, blurring the waiting into the celebration until both lose their meaning.

But Advent teaches us that anticipation is not just the uncomfortable gap before the good thing—it *is* the good thing. The waiting shapes us. It creates space for hope to grow, for longing to deepen, for our hearts to become ready to receive what God wants to give.

What might it look like to embrace stillness this Advent?

It might mean sitting in the darkness a little longer before turning on the lights, remembering that we await the Light of the World. It might

mean choosing one recipe to bake instead of seven. It might mean saying no to a party so you can say yes to an evening of silence, or a slow walk noticing how the summery air feels on your face. It might mean reading the nativity story slowly, pausing at each character—Elizabeth's joy, Zechariah's silence, Joseph's dreams—and asking what they knew about waiting that we've forgotten. Jesus himself, after all, waited thirty years before beginning his ministry. God is not in a hurry. The kingdom breaks in quietly, like yeast in dough, like a seed in soil. And we, fragmented and frantic, are invited to stop searching our internal hard drives for all the scattered pieces and simply rest. To let Advent do its slow work of gathering us back together.

When we finally arrive at Christmas morning, having practiced stillness and hopeful anticipation, we won't be arriving depleted and crashed. We'll have been defragged. Rebooted. Made ready. This Advent, do nothing. Christmas is coming. And with it, the One who makes all things new, who takes our fragmented lives and makes them whole, who teaches us that sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is simply wait, watch, and hope.



This year we have had lots of exciting events within the Parish. The Men's Breakfast is always an exciting event. It is a time when guys from all over the Parish can come together, grow in relationship with each other, and be challenged to grow in some aspect of life and faith. In early November we had our final breakfast for the year which was really well attended. We invited Luke East to share on the intersection of faith and politics which, if you don't know, are two of the topics many dinner tables ban because of the vast array of strongly held views. Luke guided us in a well-balanced perspective showing us that politics, as does faith, affects all parts of lives; when we use the supermarket it is political, when we take the bus it is political, when we come to church it is political. By showing us the ways in which Jesus lived out a politic of love and

humility, Luke challenged us to become more intentionally political in our daily lives. As we look to the coming year with more men's events, I pray that this ministry will continue to grow, inviting more and more people through our doors.

If you would like to know more about our men's breakfasts or become a part of the team, please let the office or Sam Pullenger know.



Finding a Time to Pray

Problems just tumble around us.
They get more troublesome every day.
You begin to think they'll engulf you,
then you remember, you forgot to pray.

It's so strange how one little prayer
can lighten each heavy load.
On the days when you have forgotten
you'll find old Satan there ready to goad.

Try to rise a little earlier each morning.
Spend a few minutes before entering the day.
You'll be surprised how much you've accomplished
because you saved a few minutes to pray.

By Louise Newitt

Jill Webber

The Gallery



CHRISTMAS *services*

Sat 6th Dec: 6pm:

Carols *St Saviours*

Sun 7th Dec: 6pm:

Carols *Christ Church Kihikihi*

Sun 14th Dec: 7 pm:

Lessons and Carols *St Paul's Hairini*

Fri 12th Dec: 6pm:

Family hour with Jesus' family,
food and prayer

Thurs 18 Dec: 7pm:

Blue Christmas *St John's*

(*A quiet service of Hope*)

Christmas Eve: 11.15 pm

Carols and Midnight Mass *St John's*

Christmas Day:

9am Family Christmas *St Paul's Hairini*.

9.15am Family Christmas *St Saviours*

9.30 am Family Christmas *St John's*

Sun 28 Dec:

9.30 St John's

4.30pm St Paul's Te Reo service

Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki

Short Course in Christian Living



Are you interested in 3 days away with prayer, talks, fellowship, meeting more awesome people in our Diocese, chatting in small groups, being renewed and being surrounded by the Love of God? This short course is designed to strength and encourage us, to deepen and nourish our faith, with joyful and supportive fellowship, providing you with a fantastic time.

Our next 3 day course runs from 4-5pm Thursday 16 April 2026 until 4pm Sunday 19 April 2026, at the Waitomo Village Chalets in Waitomo. The cost per person is around \$400 as we get well fed and looked after so well, this weekend away has been paid for as we never want cost to be the reason someone cannot attend so we just ask that you come, relax, enjoy, and then give a donation or set up a small automatic payment to cover costs.

Come, be inspired, be renewed, be supported, flourish and be empowered.

Please do get in touch to find out more and connect with someone near you who has attended the 3 day weekend before and can tell you more about it waikatotaranakicursillo@gmail.com. Registrations close 15th February to allow us time to book and prepare resources for you so do not delay. Please find the 3 page application form on the next pages.

Our Theme for April 2026 is You Belong Here, based on Ephesians 2:19
"You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone."



St John's Christian Women's Fellowship



All the ladies of the Parish are invited to come to our Christmas Luncheon.

Date: Tuesday 9th December

Time: 12.30pm

Venue: St John's Lounge

Cost \$25.00

RSVP to Bev Anso, 871 627, 0210 876 3693,
or bevandsteve@anso.net.nz.

*"People can't concentrate properly on
blowing other people up if their minds are
poisoned by thoughts suitable to December
25th"*

Ogden Nash

Someone forwarded to me the following piece about the 'spiritual' relevance of some vegetable plants.

Plant three rows of peas.

- ◆ Peace of mind
- ◆ Peace of heart
- ◆ Peace of soul



Plan four rows of lettuce

- ◆ Lettuce be faithful
- ◆ Lettuce be kind
- ◆ Lettuce be patient
- ◆ Lettuce really love one another



Plan three types of thyme

- ◆ Thyme for each other
- ◆ Thyme for the family
- ◆ Thyme for friends



Plant four rows of squash

- ◆ Squash gossip
- ◆ Squash indifference
- ◆ Squash selfishness
- ◆ Squash grumbling



Plant three rows of turnips

- ◆ Turn up at meetings
- ◆ Turn up to serve
- ◆ Turn up to help one another



And the more you garden grows, the more it has for sharing.

What's on in the Parish

<u>Sunday</u>	8.00 am	Service (Old St John's)
	9.00 am	Service (<i>1st & 3rd Sundays</i>) (St Paul's)
	9:15 am	Service (<i>1st, 2nd & 4th</i>) (St Saviours)
	10.30 am	Service (St John's)
<u>Monday</u>	9.30 am	Knit and Natter (Lounge)
	5.00 pm	Monday Community Meal (Lounge)
<u>Friday</u>	9:30-11 am	Mainly Music (Hall)* <i>School Term only</i>
	5.00 -7 pm	Friday Club (Hall)* <i>School Term only</i>

1st & 3rd Monday of the Month Cursillo, 2pm, Lounge

1st Thursday of the Month Film Night, 7pm, Lounge.

2nd Tuesday of the Month Women's Fellowship, 1.00pm, Lounge.

2nd Thursday of the Month Bible Study, 12 noon, Lounge

2nd Saturday of the Month Gardening Group at St John's, 9am.

3rd Tuesday of the Month Death Café, 11am, Lounge.

4th Saturday of the Month Crop Swap, 9am, Lounge.

4th Sunday of the Month Evensong Te Paariha o Rangiaowhia, 4pm.

5th Sunday of the Month Combined Parish Service, 9.30am
(Check pew sheet closer to date to see if this will go ahead).

5th Sunday of the Month Evensong, Old St John's, 4.30 pm
followed by Social Parish Meal at Te Awamutu RSA at 5.30 pm
(If no 5th Sunday in month then RSA Meal will be held on 1st Sunday at 5.30 pm).

TACC

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Ph: (07) 871 6030
Email: tacopycentre.co.nz@gmail.com



PUBLICATION OF THE AUTUMN MAGAZINE

**CLOSING DATE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:
FRIDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2025**

**Send contributions either by email to:
stjohns.awa@xtra.co.nz
or drop them into the office.**



HOME CHURCH GROUPS

Rev'd Julie Guest

SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Rev'd Stephanie Owen - 871-3400

PASTORAL CARE

Bev Anso - 871-6273

ST SAVIOURS BIBLE STUDY

NICK & Ros Empson— 871 9586

PRAYER CHAIN

Steve Anso - 871-6273

MUSIC TEAM CONTACT

Laurel Smith - 870-3326

MAGAZINE

Office - stjohns.awa@xtra.co.nz

OP SHOP

Office—stjohns.awa@xtra.co.nz

MONDAY MEAL

Sam Pullenger - contact office

INTEREST GROUPS

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Bev Anso - 871-6273

CURSILLO

Annette Rea - 871-8032

KNIT & NATTER

Office - 871-5568

GARDEN GROUP

Els Brown - 027 279-8044

YOUTH

MAINLY MUSIC - ST JOHN'S HALL

FRIDAY CLUB - ST JOHN'S HALL

Contact Office - 871-5568

(during school term for children 5-13yrs)

HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

Sam Pullenger - sampsjc3@gmail.com

PARISH TEAM

VESTRY

Christine Bryant, Helen Stubbs, Murray Gardiner, Coral Loomb, Els Brown, Paul Bryant, Jocelyn Taylor, Sam Pullenger, Warren Tims, Ros Empson, Lesley Egglestone

VICAR Rev'd Julie Guest - 027 420-5375

ASSISTANT PRIEST: Rev'd Sam Pullenger - 022 311 0718 sampsjc3@gmail.com

VICAR'S WARDEN

Christine Bryant

PEOPLE'S WARDEN

Coral Loomb

LICENSED LAY MINISTERS

Annette Rea, Helen Stubbs, Christine Bryant, Kathie Claypole

PRIEST ASSISTANTS

Rev'd Steph Owen 021 0838 7379

Rev'd Michele Willis 027 445 8929

PARISH OFFICE HOURS: Mon: 10am - 1pm Tues-Thu: 9am - 1 pm Fri: 9am-12noon

ADMINISTRATOR: Maggie Crossan PHONE: 871 5568

EMAIL: stjohns awa@xtra.co.nz

WEBSITE: stjohnsparishawamutu.com