

Connect

The newsletter of
Otaki-Waikanae Presbyterian Parish
Christ Centered † Community Serving

December 2025



We are. Or not

We are children of the incarnation. Or not.

We are children of the Kingdom of God. Or not

We are children of freedom. Or not

We are children of justice. Or not.

We are the merciful children of God. Or not

We are the gracious children of God. Or not

We are humble . Or not

We are a Royal priesthood. Or not

We are the Body of Christ. Or not.

We are being transformed. Or not.

We are regenerated. Or not

We have the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Or not

We experience the love of God. Or not.

We engage in the power of God. Or not.

We see the love and power of God in and through our lives .Or not.

We know we are loved. Or not

We strive to love others more. Or not

We have ceased judging others. Or not

We experience God`s forgiveness. Or not

We are forgiving. Or not

We know our eternity now. Or not

We live by faith in God . Or not

We have hope. Or not.

We celebrate life. Or not.

We embrace change. Or not

We give freely. Or not

Make your own list. Or not.

The Love and Grace of God gives us the freedom to choose. Or not

Are you, am I ...real? Or not?

Peter Jackson

Thoughts on the Incarnation

Christmas 2025

DECEMBER 2025 SERVICES

7 December 9.15 am Waikanae Communion
10.50 am Otaki Communion

14 December 9.15 am Waikanae Morning Worship
10.50 am Otaki Morning Worship
4.30 pm Rangiata Ecumenical
Carol Singing Service

21 December 10.00 am Waikanae Joint Service
9 Lessons and Carol

25 December 10.00 am Waikanae Joint Service
Christmas Morning

28 December 9.15 am Waikanae Morning Worship
10.50 am Otaki Morning Worship

IN MEMORIAM

These are the members of our community that
have sadly passed on in 2025.

They are all in our thoughts this Christmas and as a
congregation we extend our prayers and warmest
wishes to their families.

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| • Cathy Marshall | September 2024 |
| • Charmian Hemming | December 2024 |
| • Lin Horne | February 2025 |
| • Gordon Patching | March 2025 |
| • John Murray | March 2025 |
| • Sara Prior (nee Hemming) | April 2025 |
| • Maurice King | May 2025 |
| • Valerie Spencer | June 2025 |
| • Arthur Vaggers | June 2025 |
| • Janet Todd | June 2025 |
| • Margaret Thomson | June 2025 |
| • Dirk Rinckes | November 2025 |

Report from Parish Clerk:

Greetings to you all in this Advent Season.

I hope the season will be a blessed one for you all, no matter what stage of life, no matter what is happening in your life right now, the Advent of Christmas is a timely reminder that we can rely on the promises of God.

When Jesus came the first time, there were very few looking for Him – Simeon and Anna, the Magi, and the shepherds in the fields were told of His appearance on earth, Mary and Joseph, but His entry into the world that first time was not of global significance to many. While the Scriptures and the prophets foretold of His coming, many had given up hope or were not expecting anything to change. His second coming, when He returns as King of Kings, should be awaited by all who follow Him and who call themselves followers of Christ. However, many have also given up hope of His return, but if you believe in the birth of Christ then you must also believe in His eventual return, as this is what a faithful God has promised.

HOPE – hope in the return of Christ definitely, but also it is God's hope for us. We should live our lives right now in hope, as it connects the birth of Jesus and His return. Hope lived should give you PEACE. Where in your life do you need peace? We need it in the world surely, and the peace that God brings is the peace that leaves us in no doubt that all will one day be well, and we need not fear no matter what is going on in the world. This peace we live in every day should bring us JOY. The angels proclaimed, "good news of great joy!"

Joy in the Lord is your strength. Joy is God's gift to you more precious than anything you will receive on Christmas Day. We should feel joy because of God's LOVE for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life". (John 3:16). He gave us His Son. He gifted Him to us so we could have hope, peace, joy and love.

As we enter this season we can pause and reflect on the four things so important to our belief in Jesus Christ. They are not just words on a page, they are meant to be lived and felt and strived for in this world that has lost so much of its hope, peace, joy and love. If you can share just one of those things this Christmas with your family, your friends, people you meet, even strangers, then you will be blessed with the true meaning of Christmas.

"O what a gift! What a wonderful gift, who can tell the wonders of the Lord?"

Let us open our eyes, our ears and our hearts, it is Christ the Lord, it is He!"

Blessings,
Glenda John



An update from the Treasurer.....

Dear Parishioners

Overview from 1 July 2025 to 31 October 2025

Direct Giving remains under budget which is of considerable concern and, like households, the Parish continues to face cost increases in almost every area.

- The Parish continues to receive a grant from Central Presbytery of \$2,839 per month to support the work of our Child/Youth/Family workers. A Resource Grant of \$5,000 for this work was received in April 2024. A large part (\$30,428) of the wage and resource grants has not as yet been spent. The liability this creates to Central Presbytery has been taken into account when calculating the amount of
- General Funds available.
- A cash legacy of \$10,001 was received in September from the Estate of the late Janet Todd. We have also been advised, by the solicitors for the Estate of the late Mr Arthur Vaggars, that the Parish is a beneficiary with a 1/10th interest in the residue, shared equally with two other charities. The value of the Parish's interest in the Estate is not yet known, the solicitors advised that they expect to be able to distribute the Estate towards the end of January 2026.
- The benefits of Peter's reduced hours are not as yet fully apparent in the overall financial position as the figures remain somewhat distorted due to large insurance payment made in September.
- Profit and Loss:

October 2025:

- The Parish achieved a cash surplus of \$972, compared to a budgeted surplus of \$3,014.
- Tithes & offerings of \$7,846 were under budget by \$516 for the month. Other income of \$6,249 was \$1,463 under budget for the month.

- Total income of \$14,095 was \$1,979 under budget for the month.
- Staff wages were slightly over budget.
- Total expenses were \$13,123 compared to budgeted expenses of \$13,060.

Four months to 31 October 2025:

- The Parish incurred a cash deficit of \$8,121 compared to a budgeted deficit of \$11,577.
 - Tithes & offerings of \$28,272 were down on budget by \$5,178.
 - Garage sale income of \$3,688 was over budget by \$2,021.
 - Total income of \$74,544 was over budget by \$6,546.
 - Property expenditure of \$32,280 was under budget by \$3,253.
 - Total expenditure of \$82,665 was under budget by \$3,090.
- Cash and Investment Balances:
Since balance date, there has been a decrease in parish funds of \$5,621 for the four months to 31 October 2025.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries or wish to discuss anything further.

Kos van Lier

26 November 2025

Phone: 021 237 0644 / Email: treasurer@owpresb.nz

Gaya's 90th Birthday

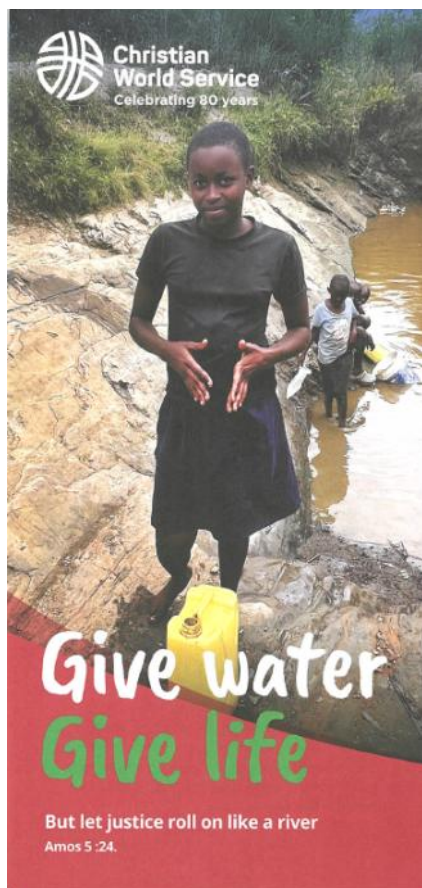


Lois's 90th Birthday



CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find an envelope
for this year's CWS Christmas Appeal
"GIVE WATER, GIVE HOPE"



Top Priority in the eradication of poverty is providing access to healthy, drinkable water, the lack of which remains a problem for millions of people caught in poverty and injustice around the globe. World Health Organisation figures show children feature largely in the estimated 1.4million people who die each year from diseases caused by the lack of safe water.

With the help of our dedicated partners, we are working to provide rainwater tanks for the most poor.

Will you help us make a difference to families living in extreme poverty by giving as generously as you are able to this year's Christmas Appeal?

Donations Envelopes may be put into a church offering bag on Christmas Day, or any Sunday in December or January, posted direct to CWS, or see information on the envelope regarding donating online. Receipts will be given for amounts \$5 and over. Be assured, your donation **will** make a difference.

Did you know.....

The nursery rhyme you sang as a child was based on a real 9-year-old girl who saved a dying lamb—and accidentally made history. "Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb..." You probably sang it in kindergarten. Maybe you sang it to your own children. But did you know Mary was real? And so was her lamb?

This is the true story behind one of the most famous nursery rhymes in history. In March 1815, on a cold morning in Sterling, Massachusetts, nine-year-old Mary Sawyer was helping her father with chores in the barn. They discovered that one of their ewes had given birth to twin lambs overnight—but something was wrong. One lamb was healthy and nursing. The other had been rejected by its mother and was lying in the straw, barely breathing, too weak to even stand. Without its mother's care and milk, the tiny creature was dying of cold and hunger.

Mary's heart broke at the sight. "Can I take it inside?" she begged her father. Her father shook his head. "No, Mary. It's almost dead anyway. Even if we try, it probably won't survive." But Mary couldn't bear to watch the lamb die. She pleaded with her father until he finally relented—though he made it clear he thought it was hopeless. When they returned to the house, Mary's mother agreed to let her try.

Mary wrapped the freezing lamb in an old garment and held it close to the fireplace, cradling it in her arms through the long night. She didn't know if it would make it to morning. The lamb was so weak it couldn't even swallow at first. But Mary refused to give up. By morning, against all odds, the lamb was standing. Over the next few days, with Mary's constant care—feeding it milk, keeping it warm, nursing it back to strength—the little creature recovered completely. And then something magical happened. The lamb, whom Mary had saved from death, became utterly devoted to her. It recognized her voice. It came running when she called. And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb truly was "sure to go."

One morning before school, Mary called out to her lamb as she was leaving. The lamb came trotting over immediately. Mary's

mischievous older brother, Nat, grinned and said, "Let's take the lamb to school with us!" Mary hesitated—she knew it was against the rules—but the idea was too tempting. She agreed. She tried to smuggle the lamb into the one-room Redstone School by hiding it in a basket under her desk, hoping it would stay quiet. For a while, her plan worked. The lamb nestled silently beneath her seat as the lesson began. Then Mary was called to the front of the classroom to recite her lesson. As she stood and began to read aloud, the lamb suddenly bleated loudly and leaped out from under her desk, following Mary to the front of the room.

The classroom erupted. The students burst into laughter at the sight of a fluffy white lamb wandering the aisles, bleating and looking for Mary. Even the teacher, Polly Kimball, "laughed outright"—though she gently told Mary that the lamb would have to go home. Mary, embarrassed but smiling, led her lamb outside to wait in a shed until school ended. She thought that would be the end of it—a funny story to tell at dinner. But someone else was watching.

Among the visitors at the school that day was a young man named John Roulstone, a college-bound student staying with his uncle, the local minister. He was charmed by the sight of Mary's devoted lamb following her into school.

The next day, John rode his horse across the fields to the little schoolhouse and handed Mary a slip of paper. On it, he'd written three simple stanzas:

"Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went,
The lamb was sure to go.
It followed her to school one day,
That was against the rule.
It made the children laugh and play,
To see a lamb at school..."

Mary treasured that piece of paper. She kept it for years, along with the memory of the lamb she'd saved. The lamb lived to be four years old, bearing three lambs of her own before she was accidentally killed by a cow in the barn. Mary's mother saved some of the lamb's wool and knitted stockings for Mary, which she treasured for the rest of her life.

But the story doesn't end there. In 1830, a well-known writer and editor named Sarah Josepha Hale published a collection called *Poems for Our Children*. Among them was a poem called "Mary's Lamb"—the same verses John Roulstone had written, plus three additional stanzas with a moral lesson about kindness to animals. The poem spread like wildfire. It was reprinted in schoolbooks across America. Children everywhere began singing it. By the 1850s, it was one of the most famous children's poems in the country.

But here's where it gets even more remarkable: In 1877, nearly sixty years after Mary saved that lamb, inventor Thomas Edison was testing his brand-new phonograph—the first machine ever capable of recording and playing back sound. He needed something to recite to test if it worked. He chose "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Edison's voice reciting those words became the first audio recording in human history.

The poem that began with a nine-year-old girl's compassion became the first sound ever captured by technology. As for Mary herself, she lived a long, quiet life. She married, raised a family, and rarely talked about the famous poem until she was an elderly woman. In 1876, at age 70, Mary finally came forward to share her story publicly when she donated the stockings her mother had made from her lamb's wool to help raise money to save Boston's Old South Meeting House. She sold autographed cards tied with yarn from those stockings, telling the world: "I am the Mary. This is my lamb's wool." People were astonished. The woman behind the nursery rhyme was real—and she was still alive.

Mary Sawyer died in 1889 at age 83. Today, a statue of her little lamb stands in Sterling, Massachusetts, commemorating the day a nine-year-old girl's compassion for a dying animal created one of the most enduring stories in children's literature.

The lesson of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" isn't just about a pet following its owner. It's about what happened before that—about a little girl who refused to let a helpless creature die, who fought for its life when everyone else had given up, who showed that kindness and determination can create miracles. Mary saved her lamb. And in return, that lamb gave her immortality. The next time you hear someone sing "Mary had a little lamb," remember: it wasn't just a nursery rhyme. It was a true story about a real girl who taught us that compassion matters, that small acts of kindness ripple through time, and that sometimes the gentlest hearts change the world.

Mary Sawyer: 1806-1889. The girl who saved a lamb—and created a legend.

Courtesy of Legacy of Empires



God Sent Us A Saviour

If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure,
God would have sent an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness,
So God sent us a Saviour

Upgraded Lights to Church Cross and Carpark



There is always repairs and maintenance to be done to the church buildings, internal and external. One special one this year has been the upgrading of the lights to the Cross on the front of Waikanae Church and new lights in the Apse.



IS THERE A 'W' IN CHRISTMAS?

Each December, I vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations...extensive card writing, endless baking decorating, and even overspending.

Yet still, I found myself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments, and of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son, Nicholas, was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a six-year-old. For weeks, he'd been memorising songs for his school's "Winter Pageant." I didn't have the heart to tell him I'd be working the night of the production. Unwilling to miss his shining moment, I spoke to his teacher. She assured me there'd be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then.

Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise. So, the morning of the dress rehearsal, I walked in ten minutes early, found a spot on the floor and sat down. As I waited, the students were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor. Then, each group, one by one, rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as "Christmas," I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment... songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and good cheer. So, when my son's class rose to sing, "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken aback by its bold title. Nicholas was aglow, as were all of his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters, and bright snow-caps upon their heads. Those in the front row – centre stage – held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song.

As the class sang "C is for Christmas," a child held up the letter C. Then, "H is for Happy," and on and on, until each child holding up a letter had presented the complete message, "Christmas Love."

The performance was going smoothly, until suddenly, we noticed her; a small, quiet, girl in the front row holding the letter "M" upside down – totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W". The children in the audience snickered at this little one's mistake. But she had no idea they were laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her "W". Although many teachers tried to shush the children, the laughter continued until the last letter was raised, and we all saw it together.

A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen. In that instant, we understood the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the chaos, there was a purpose for our festivities. For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear:

CHRISTWAS LOVE.

Anon

Things To Do This Christmas

Mend a quarrel
Seek out a forgotten friend
Give a soft answer
Keep a promise
Find the time
Listen
Apologise if you are wrong
Be gentle
Express your gratitude
Welcome a stranger

The Wednesday Club

1st Wednesday Club - Games Night



2nd Wednesday Club Watsons Tour





Merry Christmas

MAY YOUR HEART BE FILLED WITH LOVE
AND YOUR HOME WITH LAUGHTER.

PARISH CONTACT DETAILS

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Phone: 021 207 9455 (mob)
Email: minister@owpresb.nz

Parish Clerk: Glenda John
Phone: 027 329 5440
Email: parishclerk@owpresb.nz

Parish office: Hours Waikanae: 9.00am—12.00pm
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
Hours Otaki: 9.00am to 12.00pm Tuesday
Phone: 04 2936987
Email: office@owpresb.nz
Website: www.otakiwaikanaechurch.nz
45 Ngaio Road, Waikanae



Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Otaki –Waikanae Presbyterian Parish

You were visited by...

Elder/Visitor: _____

On (date): _____

Phone: _____