

# *The Messenger*

## Parish of St Thomas, Tāmaki Spring Edition 2025



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## Parish fair

Please join us for our parish fair on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October, between 10 am and 2 pm. Speak to the Vicar if you have any questions.

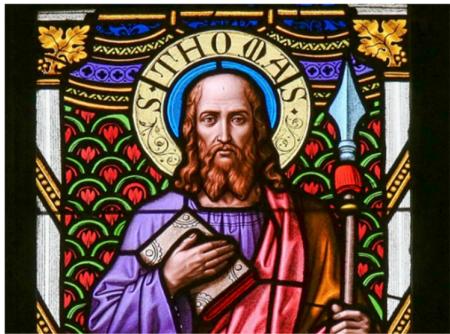
## Faithfulness in the Everyday: Winter's quiet invitation

Noel Cox

As we move through the later weeks of winter and into August, we find ourselves deep in what the Church calls “Ordinary Time.” The name can be misleading. There is nothing ordinary about the call to follow Christ. But it is in these quieter months – after the drama of Easter, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday, and before the hope of Advent – that we are invited to live out our faith not in grand gestures, but in steady witness.

August in Auckland sits in an in-between space. The coldest days are mostly behind us, yet spring hasn't quite arrived. The skies can still be grey, the wind finds its way through every coat, and the rain taps steadily on our windows. We notice the light lingering just a little longer in the evenings, yet we're still reaching for scarves and soup. This time of year, so often overlooked, offers something we rarely make space for: slowness.

There is a rhythm to the natural world that the church year mirrors, and right now, both are encouraging us to pause. In the natural world, the soil is resting, the trees are gathering strength, and the birds are quieter. Everything is preparing for what comes next. So too in the life of faith.



St Thomas

The early disciples, including St Thomas, are often remembered for dramatic moments – doubt and declaration, questions and confessions. But most of their lives, like most of ours, were lived in the rhythm of the everyday: travelling, working, praying, encouraging others, and holding to the Gospel through hardship and uncertainty. The Gospels give glimpses, but behind each moment of revelation was a life lived in

faithfulness.

We, too, are called to that same steady faithfulness. In August, the lectionary readings continue to challenge us to live wisely and compassionately, to listen carefully, and to remain alert to the Spirit's prompting in daily life. These themes are especially fitting for our parish. Whether it's in preparing for Sunday services, sharing a cup of tea, or reaching out to someone in need, we live the Gospel in small acts of grace.



The reconstructed remains  
of the 1843 church

At St Thomas, even during the stillness of winter, the life of the parish continues – sometimes more gently, sometimes more inwardly. The people still gather. The music still plays. The prayers still rise. We know that growth often happens underground before it ever appears above the surface.

This is also a time for tending to our inner lives. A good book. A walk along the water's edge. A handwritten letter. These are not just pleasant pastimes – they are part of what it means to care for our souls and one another. There is a deep blessing in simplicity, and winter gives us permission to rediscover it.

Quiet seasons can be fertile ones. We don't always need fireworks to grow in faith – sometimes, it is the slow, hidden work of the Spirit that bears the most fruit. As St Thomas learned, faith is not only found in moments of revelation, but also in the willingness to walk on when the path is not fully clear.

Let August be a month of noticing: the small beauties, the quiet moments, the still gifts of community. Whether you are finding joy in the slowness or struggling with its silence, know that this too is part of the rhythm of life – and part of our shared walk as a parish.

# What do the Magi have to teach us? The Magi and their gifts to Baby Jesus

Lizzie Samuel

Wise men from the East were Astrologers who studied the stars and their dreams for divine revelation. The journey of wise men from the East to pay homage to



Edward Burne-Jones, "The Adoration of the Magi," 1890 (tapestry)

the newborn baby Jesus is recorded in the Gospel of Mathew. This event is significant as it highlights the recognition of Jesus as the king of the Gentiles and fulfils the old Testament prophesies regarding the Messiah. The visit is traditionally celebrated in the liturgical calendar as Epiphany

The God we believe in spoke to them through their religion which was not the faith of the Jewish faith or Christianity. Their journey to Judea was prompted by their observation of a celestial phenomenon. which they interpreted as the sign of the birth of a new king.

Is there a way to God outside scriptural revelation (through dreams and astrology) this story suggests there is and there are other stories in the Bible that suggests God can be found in different ways outside direct scriptural revelation.

The Magi came to pay tribute to a specific God not any God. A relationship with a specific God is key as is a specific tradition and specific spiritual practices of worship and prayer which help us access and commune with such a God. Such a specific God reveals and embodies makes all the differences. But this does not mean God may not be encountered in other ways also God is bigger than our traditions values and commitments. This also means that we believe about God about the people and about our purpose in the Universe.

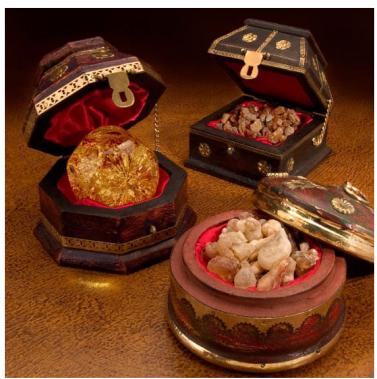
According to Mathew Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. during the time of Herod the king. Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem asking where is the one who has been born as the king of the Jews? They said that they said that they had seen the star and have come to worship Him. Presumably without the appearance of the star the Magi would have been left in the dark concerning the arrival of Jesus.

For the Magi, the star was a gift from God because it helped them to get them to Jesus. It was the invitation to meet God.

When Herod heard about this, he thought it as a direct threat to his throne. So he called the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them where the Messiah to be born. They informed him in Bethlehem according to Prophets. So Herod deceitfully instructed the Magi to report to him so that he would also go and worship Him.

Guided by the Star the Magi continued their journey until the star stood over the place Baby Jesus was born. They rejoiced with delight and presenting their gifts of Gold, Frankincense – gold representing Jesus' kingship, Frankincense, His priestly role, and Myrrh for shadowing His suffering and death.

Warned in a dream not to return to Herod the Magi took a different route back to their country. This divine prevention protected the child Jesus.



Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh

The visit of the Magi underscores the universal recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. The journey from distant lands symbolises the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemption plan. The fulfilment of prophecy and the acknowledgement of Jesus' kingship by Magi affirm the Divine identity and mission.

The God we worship revealed and embodied in Jesus that we commit ourselves in love that we defend and protect the vulnerable. The truth of

Jesus Christ is bigger and richer than any one can contain. God graciously invites all sinners of different nations, tribes and tongues to receive His life-saving Salvation. Maybe the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas must have been started with the visit of the Magi.

Editor: While the story of the Magi is most often told in the season of Epiphany, their journey and their seeking have something to say to us year-round. As we continue in Ordinary Time and approach the Season of Creation, we are reminded that faith is often a path of patient searching, attentive wonder, and the courage to follow signs not fully understood. The above reflection invites us to see the Magi not just as seasonal figures, but as enduring companions for anyone seeking Christ in the midst of daily life.

# Mothers Union Pilgrimage to the Far North

Katherine McIntyre

A significant event took place in May when MU members were invited by our Provincial President Norma Evans to her home marae at Whatuwhiwhi a coastal town in the far north.



Captain Cook sailed past this place in 1769.

It has seen 27 of its sons go off to World War 1 and a similar number in the 28th Maori Battalion in World War 2.

Three features of this pilgrimage bought enjoyment to those able to participate – appreciating the five hour journey through beautiful scenery, encountering such a warm welcome. Superb hospitality with most of us sleeping on the Marae.



We visited two of the historic churches, Awanui and Peria, where we celebrated Holy Communion. Ven Fran Hokianga, Archdeacon of Muriwhenua (end of the land) shared the history and told us of the faithful people who had worshipped there. Gwen Needham from Whangarei

played the Harmonium and the church resounded to our song of praise.

Most of the time we shared our stories, with laughter.



The atmosphere was like a revival.

People loved coming together, meeting others and celebrating our faith. The wairua flowed through the hui with a synergy that ran deep.



Mother's Union is strong and has deep roots in the Far North.

Let's do it again!!

## Pipes and Praise: A Brief History of the Church Organ

Noel Cox



The *hydraulis* of Dion, the earliest archaeological example of a pipe organ (1<sup>st</sup> century BC)

There is something timeless about the sound of a pipe organ filling a church. It can be bold or gentle, grand or meditative. It leads us in hymns, frames our prayers, and marks our most sacred moments. But have you ever wondered where this remarkable instrument came from – and how an example found its place at St Thomas?

### From Ancient Air to Sacred Sound

The story of the organ begins long before it entered the church. The earliest known ancestor was the *hydraulis*, an ancient Greek invention from the third century BC, which used water pressure to move air through pipes. These early organs were used in amphitheatres and civic events rather than temples.

By the time of the Roman Empire, the organ had become an imperial instrument – played in courts and public games. But its transition into Christian worship came much later, with the earliest

recorded use in a church setting occurring around the eighth or ninth century in Western Europe.

The organ's adoption by the Church was gradual. Its ability to support singing and enhance the liturgy eventually saw it spread throughout the cathedrals and monasteries of mediæval Christendom.

By the Baroque period, composers like J.S. Bach elevated the organ to new artistic heights, weaving theology, music, and craftsmanship into breathtaking works still heard today. Luther and his followers often used their hymns, or chorales, to teach tenets of the faith to worshipers. Unlike Calvin, Luther

enthusiastically welcomed the contribution of music in worship, provided it was less ornate and distracting than was the previous practice. It would also be in the native tongue alongside or in place of Latin. Luther regarded music as the greatest gift of God after religion itself. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) observed, “Luther sided with the ancient church against Calvin and the leftists of the Reformation”.

Anglican church music is unique for its integration of music and spoken English prayer, its choral liturgy, and its intellectual and aesthetic sophistication. The organ is not merely an instrument of accompaniment but a liturgical voice that partners with the choir and congregation in worship, offering both grandeur and intimacy in sound.

### The Organ at St Thomas

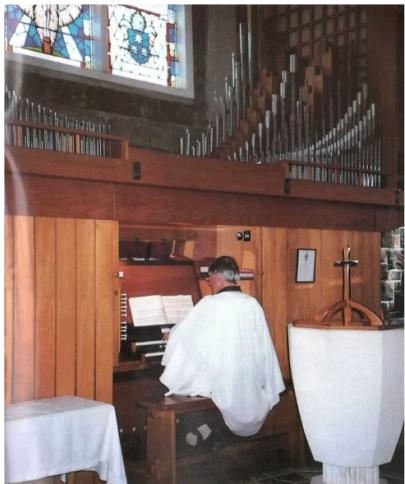


The 1969 Croft organ in St Thomas

Here at St Thomas, Tāmaki, our own organ – modest in scale but important nevertheless – stands as part of that tradition. It is not a towering cathedral organ with thousands of pipes, but it has accompanied generations of worshippers through seasons of joy and sorrow.

Our instrument is a 1969 Croft semi-tracker organ, with two manuals. It is a classical organ, one of only two of its kind in New Zealand. It was the gift of Jack Butland, and installed in 1970. Whether it is accompanying the congregation in a sturdy Charles Wesley hymn, or being used for an organ recital or a masterclass, it speaks with a voice that transcends words.

The organ in St Thomas's is unique in New Zealand as it was the commencement of a handful of organs built in New Zealand by George Croft & Son in what we call the neo-classical style. This type of organ building drew its inspiration from Europe in the 1920s and 1930s but was only starting to be appreciated and actioned in New Zealand in the 1960's. Organs of this type have mechanical linkages from the keyboards to the soundboards (on which the pipes sit) and exposed unencased pipework, with “classical” voicing (chif) to the pipework. For service playing there is an electronic piston system which allows the player to preset combinations.



An Organist at the console

The St Thomas organ combined these features together with the absence of an 8 foot Principal stop (possibly because of the stained glass window) and no enclosed division negating the traditional Swell division. Other organs in Auckland along these lines include St Patrick's Cathedral and the Maclaurin Chapel of the University of Auckland. Therefore, the instrument in St. Thomas's is unique.

Over the years, organists at St Thomas have each brought their own touch to the instrument, coaxing from it a range of emotion and reverence. More recently, we've welcomed a young organist-in-training to the bench, keeping the tradition alive for a new generation. Several others have joined us so that now we have a strong team of committed organists.

### More Than an Instrument

An organ is more than a machine; it's a liturgical companion. Its breath – quite literally – carries our voices and prayers. It helps us worship with dignity, joy, solemnity, and celebration. Even in its pauses, it gives space for silence and reflection.

In an age of digital convenience, our organ reminds us of craft and continuity. It belongs to a world of levers and bellows, pedals and pipes, yet it continues to inspire awe, even for those who do not play a note.

### A Living Legacy

In September, the organ at St Thomas will fall silent for a short time – not out of neglect, but for renewal. After many years of faithful service, a major refurbishment is scheduled to begin on 22 September, led by the South Island Organ Company. The project will involve a thorough cleaning of pipes, repairs to worn or noisy components, and essential technical upgrades, including replacement of long-problematic stop action solenoids and the return of a missing pedal pipe.

The work will take approximately two weeks, during which time the organ builders will use the parish hall as a workspace and store for pipes and equipment. The timing – at the start of the school holidays – has been chosen

carefully to minimise disruption. While the organ will be out of service for one Sunday, services in the church will continue as usual, using the French harmonium.

This project is more than a maintenance task; it is an investment in the musical and spiritual life of our parish. The organ has led hymns, offered quiet reflection, and celebrated joyous moments for decades. Now it will be restored so that it can continue to do so for many years to come.

We are grateful to acknowledge that generous donations have already been received. Others who may wish to contribute – whether in thanksgiving, in memory of a loved one, or simply in appreciation of the organ’s place in our worship – are warmly encouraged to do so. Your gift will help ensure that this beautiful instrument continues to enrich our services for generations to come.

## Churches in Samoa

Jocelyn Whyte



A visitor to the Pacific island nation of Samoa expecting to find lush tropical forest and cultivation, coconut palms and beaches, would not be disappointed. They would enjoy the attractive villages with their colourful, manicured roadside gardens. And they would marvel at the splendid tropical flowers that abound everywhere.



What they might not expect is the proliferation of churches, even if they had been warned: you must go to a church service in Samoa, the singing is wonderful. Every village seems to have at least two churches, often more, and they are all quite large and often spectacular. At least 75 per cent of the population is Christian with the Christian Congregational Church of Samoa (formerly the London Missionary Society) being the largest denomination, followed by

Roman Catholic, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, and a few smaller groups.

On the first Sunday morning of a recent holiday in Samoa with a walking group, our host invited us to the local Catholic church, St Theresa, in Lepea village, Upolu. This church, which cost \$7 million, and took seven years of fundraising and building, was opened at the end of 2023. It is the third church on the site and serves 70 families. It is built on two sides of a square, with an entrance at the end of each arm, the main entrance in the diagonal between the two arms, and the altar in the apex of the triangle. The ceiling has intricate woodwork; there is a tall altarpiece of carved and painted wood depicting the Stations of the Cross; and in front of the altar is a painted wood sculpture of the Last Supper. Forty-six stained glass windows in the church illustrate both biblical stories and Samoan stories.

It was Mother's Day and, as well as women taking special part in the service, people honoured mothers by presenting them with leis of sweets. There was a special blessing when mothers in the congregation, including those in our group, were sprinkled with holy water. The church was reasonably full, the congregation mostly in white. The music seemed to be recorded, rather than live, and I had the impression that a large choir group did most of the singing. Afterwards we had a chance to look round the building, to chat with some of the parishioners, and also with the man who had led the building project.



Catholic church in Safotu village, Savaii



Catholic cathedral in Apia, Upolu

There were many other spectacular churches throughout both islands, such as: the Catholic Cathedral in Apia, Upolu, and the Catholic church in Safotu village, Savaii, the first Roman Catholic church in Samoa, built of bleached coral German missionaries.

On Savaii, we also found churches that had succumbed to the ravages of nature.

Samoa has been created by volcanic activity over the last seven million years, the most recent eruption, that of Mt

Matavanu, between 1905 and 1911. The lava from this eruption buried five villages as it flowed to the shore.

At the Saleaula Lava Fields a roofless, windowless church still stands amongst the lava that coursed right through it. The village has been rebuilt on the barren

surface and it is amazing how much re-vegetation has occurred there in just over 100 years.



church at Falealupo, Savaii

Near the northern tip of Savaii is the ruined church at Falealupo, a victim of the wind and waves of Cyclone Ofa in February 1990. A plaque in the ruins commemorates Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u, the first Polynesian cardinal, who grew up in this area.



Ruined church at Saleaula Lava Fields, Savaii

Another Sunday, on Savaii, we went to a Congregationalist church right next to where we were staying. Again, the congregation were all in white, the women with white hats to complement their white dresses. Hymns were sung with vigour and with great harmony, by the entire congregation. There was no music to accompany them, but a woman led the singing, and everyone joined in. When we reached the concluding prayers, people seemed to be on the edge of their

seats, poised to spring up as soon as the service was over. Then there was an orderly but swift retreat to the doors at the back of the church. By the time our group had gathered and followed, everyone had dispersed and the doors were being locked. No cup of tea or socializing! I had never seen anything like it! So we all took a gentle stroll along the village street to admire the houses and gardens, before going back to the resort for lunch.





## Conformed or Transformed? The Church in a Changing World

Noel Cox



*The Church Fathers, an 11th-century Kievan Rus' miniature from Svyatoslav's miscellany*

In a recent edition of *The Messenger* (May, “Why personal faith and the teaching of the church go hand-in-hand”), we reflected on how personal faith and the teaching of the Church go hand-in-hand. That theme naturally leads us to another: What is the Church’s relationship with the wider world? Should it evolve to reflect changing social values, or is its deeper task to offer an alternative – to call us not to conformity, but to transformation?

From the earliest days of Christianity, the Church has lived in tension with the world around it. St Paul put it starkly: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2). This was not a call to escape the world, but to engage it differently – with hearts and minds continually renewed by the Spirit.

The Church Fathers understood this well. St Athanasius, who stood firm against prevailing cultural and political pressures in defence of the divinity of Christ, once wrote: “The Lord did not come to make a display. He came to heal and to teach suffering humanity.” The Church, then, is not meant to mirror society, but to minister to it – often by standing apart from it.

This theme echoes through history. Anglican theologian Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1960s – a time of great social upheaval – insisted that the Church must not be merely a thermometer, measuring society’s moods, but a thermostat, helping to set them according to Gospel truth. More recently, Rowan Williams has spoken of the Church as “God’s workshop,”

where people are formed in the likeness of Christ, not confirmed in the image of the age.

There are always pressures on the Church to “move with the times.” Some change is good and necessary – we have rightly become more attentive to justice, inclusion, and the healing of past wounds. But the Church’s calling is not simply to adapt; it is to be faithful. As the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar put it: “The Church does not have to say everything; she has to say what is essential.” The Church must respond to the world not with reaction or retreat, but with the essential truth of the Gospel. This can be challenging for the Church, especially if what the Gospel teaches us to preach to the world is unwelcome or unfashionable.

From the Orthodox tradition, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware reminds us that the Church is not simply a human institution but the “Body of Christ,” and therefore called to holiness. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one of the most ancient expressions of Christianity, speaks of the Church as the ark of salvation – a vessel that carries not only memory and tradition but healing and transformation.



*“Descent of Holy Spirit on the Apostles” (1885) by  
Mikhail Vrubel*

In that vision, the Church is not a reflection of the world, but a sign of the Kingdom. As St John Chrysostom taught, it is not enough to reform social structures – we must be transfigured ourselves.

The Anglican tradition holds these tensions with characteristic honesty. We do not separate ourselves from the world, but

neither do we blend into it like chameleons. We value reason and experience, but always within the framework of Scripture and the creeds. Our liturgy speaks of a God who enters the world, not to affirm everything about it, but to redeem it. Our task, then, is not simply to keep pace with culture, but to walk faithfully in the path of Christ.

That path is rarely easy. But as C.S. Lewis once observed, “The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ … If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.”

So, should the Church change? Sometimes, yes. But only if that change serves the deeper work of God’s grace. The goal is not to be fashionable, but to be faithful.

The Church is not ours to reinvent, but it is ours to receive and to renew. We come not to find our preferences confirmed, but to be shaped – by word and sacrament, by teaching and tradition, by prayer and community – into the likeness of Christ. That is how the Church changes the world: by changing us.

Let us then be a Church that listens, yes – but also a Church that teaches, forms, prays, and points always to Christ. Not conformed, but transformed.

## Donations or bequests

Please consider remembering St Thomas Anglican Church, Tāmaki, or the St Thomas Maintenance Trust, in your will. Your gift will help maintain our church and sustain its mission for future generations.

Here is suggested wording for a bequest clause that could be included in a will. It is kept flexible but legally clear – a solicitor would normally refine it to suit the individual's circumstances:

*“I give to St Thomas Anglican Church, Tāmaki [the sum of \$\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_% of my estate / the residue of my estate], for its general purposes, and I declare that the receipt of the Vicar and Churchwardens shall be a full and sufficient discharge to my Executors.”*

Alternatively, if the person wishes to support the upkeep of the buildings through the trust:

*“I give to the St Thomas’s Maintenance Trust Fund [the sum of \$\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_% of my estate / the residue of my estate], to be applied towards the maintenance and preservation of the church buildings, and I declare that the receipt of the Trustees shall be a full and sufficient discharge to my Executors.”*

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