

# St John's BEACON

St John's Presbyterian Church, Rotorua

Summer 2020 / 21



To Inform, Inspire, and Reflect the unique culture of our church



*You are the light of the world.*  
A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.  
Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.  
Instead they put it on its stand,  
and it gives light to everyone in the house.  
In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may  
see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:14–16

*The name ‘*St John’s* **BEACON**’*  
was born out of the imagery of St John’s  
Church being a shining light for Christ in  
Rotorua. St John’s Church is a Ramaroa -  
a lighthouse, a **BEACON**,  
reflecting our mission statement  
‘Making Jesus Known by Who We Are’

# EDITORIAL

*W*ELCOME to this first edition of *St John's* **BEACON** !

St John's is part of the RDPC (Rotorua District Presbyterian Church). *St John's* **BEACON** is part of a strategy to foster more connection within our St John's church family. The magazine team have set out to Inform, Inspire, and Reflect the unique culture of our church.

We hope you will be encouraged and excited by our New Building feature, looking at the past, present and future journey that we are prayerfully trekking on together. We have a glimpse into our Youth Group and their activities, a look at St John's Leadership Team through one of its members, and a moving insight into the creation and gifting of our wooden Cross. We also get to know a couple of our church Support Crew—just two of the many volunteers who work in the background serving and greatly enhancing our church life.

Putting this first edition together has been a fun voyage of discovery – there is so much going on in the church, with so many interesting people involved, each with a story to tell, that it was hard to know where to start. There is no shortage of stories for future editions!

The intent is to publish *St John's* **BEACON** three times a year. We welcome any suggestions for future publications – what would you like us to include? If you would like to contribute an inspiring or interesting story for the next edition, or if you would perhaps enjoy being a member of the team, please contact one of us or the church office.

Happy reading!

*St John's* **BEACON** Team.

*L to R: Peter Irvine, Elizabeth Pilaar,  
Kerry Alemann, Alison Cornwall and Kurien  
Yohannan (Ranjit).*



# OUR CROSS

...a labour and gift of love

*R*ev John Dalbeth has a long history with St John's. His great-grandfather was involved in the building of the original St John's Church in the late 1890s. His family has farmed in Rotorua since 1912 and John took over the family farm in 1969. John was ordained in 1995 and went on to be the Minister for Trinity (Ngongotaha & Mamaku) for 15 years, and St Andrew's for a further four years, retiring in 2008.



**Our beautiful Cross  
will be relocated and  
installed in the new  
St John's Church  
building.**

When I began farming in 1969, I acquired a farm whose fences had seen better days. Over the preceding years the native timber of the posts had, one by one, begun to rot, with some finally succumbing and giving away completely. I can still remember the favourite pastime of my sheep, finding a hole and pushing through it, and of course being sheep, telling all their friends about it who dutifully followed suit. If they had but shut up, they probably would have got away with it and enjoyed the fresh pasture until I found out the next day; but no, the ones who were waiting their turn to get through had to complain loudly about it!

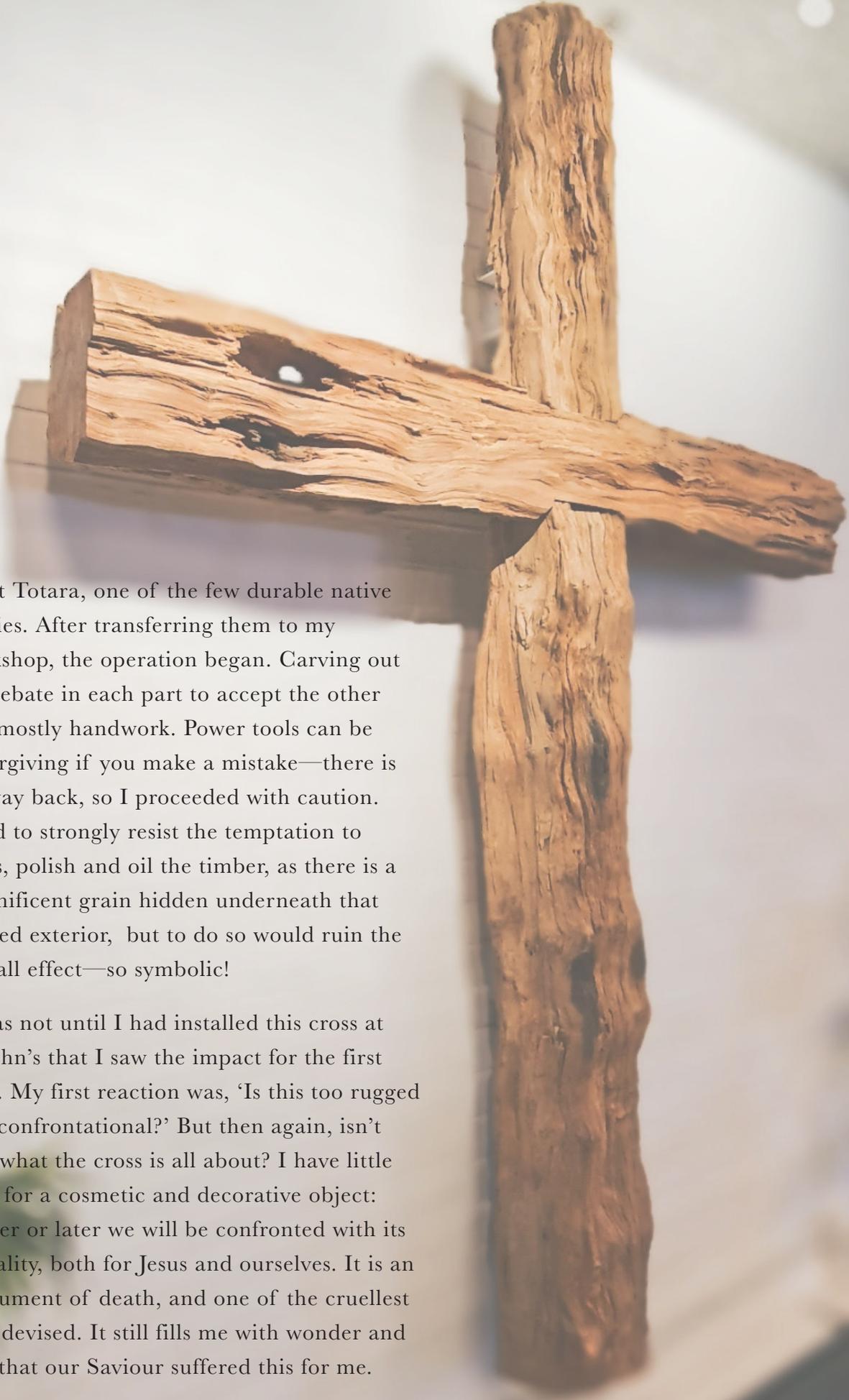
So, over the next 20 years I systematically replaced all the fences on the farm, but instead of using perishable native timber posts I used pressure-treated ones that don't rot. The salvaged timber usually got burned over winter

to keep us warm, so very little survived. Some of the few sound posts did, and these were eventually used for retaining walls in our garden, a use that still has a few survivors sturdily remaining in position. Two or three strainer posts, the anchor posts at the end of a fence, were not used, and were put in a pile in a corner out of the way, with trees being planted sometime later alongside them.

**AFTER THE ST JOHN'S FIRE, WHEN WE WERE BEGINNING TO SET UP FENTON ST, I ASKED IF WE NEEDED A CROSS, AND THE REPLY WAS 'YES PLEASE.'**

So, what to use?

When I first rediscovered these strainers—now under a hedge—I wasn't too hopeful. They looked pretty rotten and useless, but after a good water-blast to remove the moss, dirt and rot, I began to see possibilities. The timber is



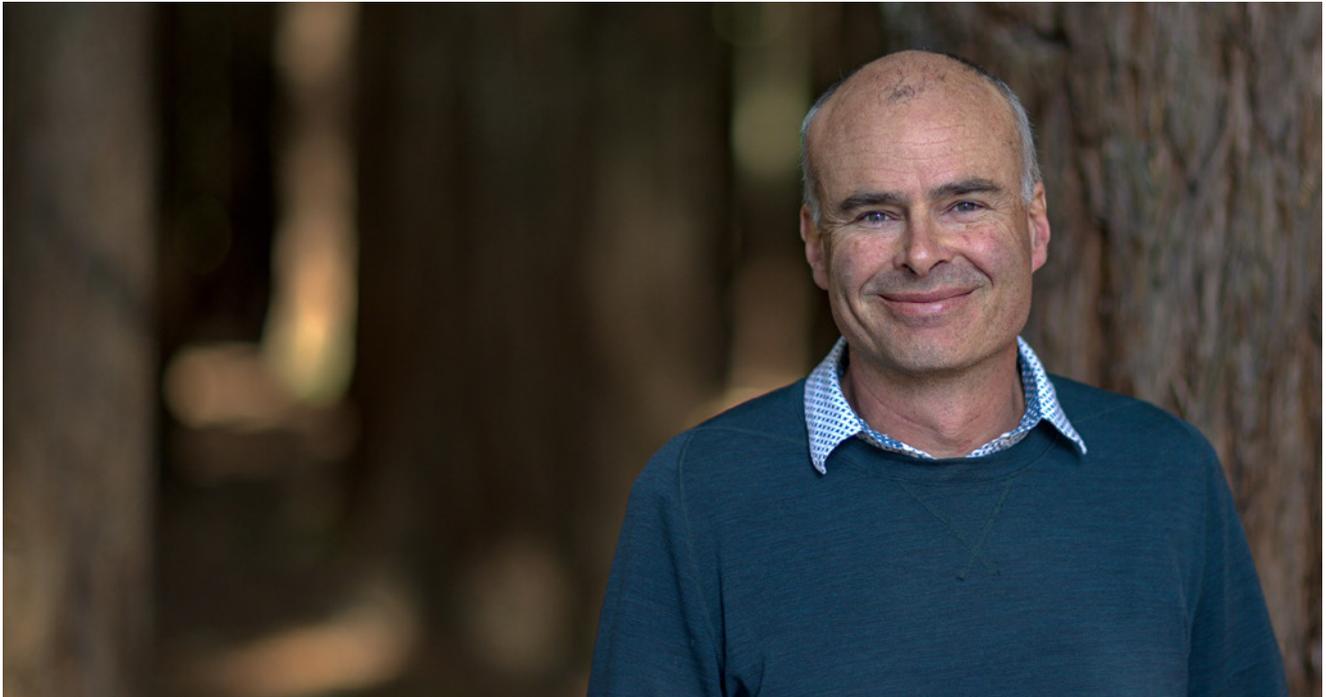
heart Totara, one of the few durable native species. After transferring them to my workshop, the operation began. Carving out the rebate in each part to accept the other was mostly handwork. Power tools can be unforgiving if you make a mistake—there is no way back, so I proceeded with caution. I had to strongly resist the temptation to dress, polish and oil the timber, as there is a magnificent grain hidden underneath that rugged exterior, but to do so would ruin the overall effect—so symbolic!

It was not until I had installed this cross at St John's that I saw the impact for the first time. My first reaction was, 'Is this too rugged and confrontational?' But then again, isn't that what the cross is all about? I have little time for a cosmetic and decorative object: sooner or later we will be confronted with its brutality, both for Jesus and ourselves. It is an instrument of death, and one of the cruellest ever devised. It still fills me with wonder and awe that our Saviour suffered this for me.

Blessings,  
**John**

# PRAYERFUL LEADERSHIP

*O*ur Leadership Team consists of committed church members working together to provide guidance and oversight for the workings of St John's. This edition introduces a member of that team, Daniel Gapes.



## Chatting with Daniel Gapes about the Leadership Team

### What does the Leadership Team do?

Well, we do have lots of meetings! We are responsible for St John's Church within the RDPC, providing direction and support for various ministries and programmes. We try to enable the people of St John's to be an effective congregation that contributes to God's kingdom. We report to the RDPC Council who have leadership oversight over all our Rotorua Presbyterian churches.

### What is the Team working on now?

The obvious challenge for this year has been Covid-19. This has been quite complicated. Many decisions we have made recently have

been difficult and sometimes quite painful when dealing with the implications of this pandemic outbreak.

We know God is preparing us for new things. We will soon be in a new building, and part of our task is to clarify who we are, and ensure St John's is equipped to make an enduring contribution to the life of Rotorua.

Presently we are working on strengthening the pastoral care ministry within the church. Energy is also going into building up and nourishing relationships within our church

family. We are providing opportunities to connect individuals and groups to each other and the life of the church. Furthermore we are providing oversight and support of youth and children's programmes.

And finally, we pray and seek God's direction for our church, our people and our future within the Rotorua community.

### **What is the best part of being on the Leadership Team?**

**I have always felt privileged to participate in a team with remarkable gifts, a sense of unity, and genuine faith.**

I have loved being amongst a group of people committed to seeking God's purpose for our local congregation. We have always shared together the challenge, joy and sometimes heartache of our task, learning to trust God and seek His direction.

### **What inspires you?**

**Hope! Life is a wonderful thing, but it sure does get challenging. Hope gets a person through when times are tough, and our best hope is in our Saviour, so clinging to Jesus is all right by me!**

## **Who is Daniel Gapes?**

**Daniel grew up in Rotorua. He took an academic path, studying chemistry and engineering at Massey University. Returning to work in Rotorua, he met Nicola (also a local), and they were married in 1996. They went to Australia to study, and returned with two children and a PhD in 2003. With two more children born locally, they were a very noisy household of six.**

**Daniel is a Research Leader at Scion. Some of his recent projects have been working on new ways to support sanitation in the developing world and growing edible bacteria using methane gas. He spends his spare time supporting his children's activities, trail running, kayaking, fishing, and baking the odd loaf of Ciabatta bread.**

**He has been leading the local ICONZ group (formerly Boys' Brigade) for twelve years, and has served on the St John's Leadership Team for fifteen years. He thinks life in Rotorua is about as good as it gets, and likes the Bible verse 'But godliness with contentment is great gain.'** 1Timothy 6:6



# THE NEW BUILD

**Construction work has commenced for the new St John's church! The corner site at Ranolf and Victoria Streets will be a hive of activity through to late 2021.**

Site preparation, including demolition of the existing concrete slab and removal of redundant underground services, is the first task. The new underground services will be installed before the new reinforced concrete slab is poured. The steel structure is a clever design with a short erection time so the 'bones' of the building will be completed over summer. A weatherproof wrap will be installed over the build to protect it, to help ensure minimal weather delays, and will contribute significantly towards a quality finished product.

The exterior of the building is brick with an integrated Poutama pattern. This has been created especially for St John's by lead architect Werner Naude, with cultural input from June

Grant, a well-known Māori artist. The Poutama design (meaning stairway to heaven), has significant Māori spiritual symbolism of man's advancement and heading up towards heaven.

Following the 2017 fire that destroyed the 1989 church, Rev Lance Thomas led a group to canvass the congregation for ideas for a new church design. The 'Eight Principle Rebuild Concept' document was the result. This was approved by the Rotorua District Presbyterian Church (RDPC) Council and has been the cornerstone reference throughout the design process. The design team of highly skilled architects and engineers, including Werner Naude from DCA Architects of



Transformation (a Rotorua company), completed the building plans following these requirements.

In 2018 a Building Committee was appointed to manage the process of building our new church. They established close relationships with the team of consultants who enthusiastically collaborated to develop a building designed to glorify God, and to help the community have a relationship with Him. The design consultants will be actively working with Veros (Project Management Company) and

iLine (Construction Company) to ensure the design specifications are incorporated as intended.

As the design evolved, great care was taken to ensure the Eight Principles were not compromised as technical, regulatory, and budget constraints were balanced. A considerable amount of research was conducted to establish the best way to achieve these principles, and then how best to seamlessly marry up the solutions to ensure a practical, efficient, and God glorifying outcome.





**The design team were also conscious of the need to design a church building for the future**

*Lead Architect Werner Naude discussing design with Daniel Alemann*

The opportunity to build a church excited the team of technical experts when they were challenged to integrate the Eight Principles. Flexibility of spaces to be used for different purposes—especially with several events within the building at the same time—required innovative technology to enable easy flow between them. All technical requirements need to meet strict building codes and council bylaws – and remain within the budget.

Many options were considered in the early part of the project, including looking at other sites in the city area. The design team were also conscious of the need to design a church building for the future—which can be tricky when the future is unknown. DCA held design workshops with specific user groups including staff, children and youth, community facing ministries, and the kitchen users’ team.

There were many items that required careful consideration. For example, the acoustic design of the worship area to ensure the requirements for different size groups and noise levels are suitable, whilst also balancing amplified and non-amplified sound patterns.

Simple things like the ducting of conditioned

air and heating for different parts of the church, and the associated noise levels of pumps needed solutions. Managing the huge amount of rain water collected on the large single roof in a heavy downpour also required technical innovations to ensure a suitable outcome.

The congregation wanted timber and natural light to be incorporated into the design. Computer modelling provided data on the position of the sun for all times and days of the year, and this information was used to ensure natural light will enhance the beauty and positioning of the timber.

There are constant legal, contractual, and regulatory matters to establish and manage whilst ensuring everything progresses in an orderly and timely manner. Within the Presbyterian church structure there are several agencies that require reporting to and obtaining approvals from. This helps to ensure the project does not overstretch the available resources, and meets Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) requirements. RDPC Council and Kaimai Presbytery have local oversight of the project which is managed by the St John’s Building Committee.

**The Building Committee have been very appreciative of the prayerful and encouraging support of St John's and other RDPC congregations, and acknowledge it has been a privilege and humbling to receive so much support and interest from within the Rotorua Community.**

The St John's community has a wonderful opportunity to *Make Jesus known by who we are* as we interface with Rotorua businesses and community as the high-profile new church building takes shape.



*Rev. Simon Cornwall blessing the site with other dignitaries, kaumātua and Intern Rob Williams.*



*Eileen Shapley and Jonathan Pilaar with Mayor Steve Chadwick turning the first sod for the build.*



*Building Committee L to R: Andrew Thomson, Simon Cornwall, Owen Roberts, Peter Irvine, Cathy Cooney, Luke Nelson, Jonathan Pilaar, Daniel Alemann, Luke Martin. Absent - Neil Poskitt*

# BUILDING COMMITTEE

**St John's Building Committee is a team of eight highly skilled and experienced professionals who have willingly committed many hours to progress of this build. Their concerted efforts and dedication have taken us to this momentous place where the build is finally underway three and a half long years since the fire. In this issue we're profiling our co-convenors, Cathy Cooney and Daniel Alemann.**

## CATHY COONEY

Cathy is an Elder, served on St John's Leadership Team from 2005 to 2015, was an inaugural member of the RDPC Council, and is the convenor of Community Facing Ministries.

Cathy is a nurse, a midwife, and a health sector Chief Executive with extensive governance experience. She led the \$100m facility redevelopment of Rotorua and Taupō Hospitals, the recently opened \$120m Greymouth Hospital, and is involved with the governance group for the redevelopment of Nelson Hospital. She recently advised on the development of the Lakes DHB mental health facility business case.

Cathy has chaired many local and national groups including Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology since 2016, the interRAI New Zealand Governance Board since 2015, and is the national leader of workforce development planning for the 60,000 strong health and disability support workforce. She serves on the Health Practitioners' Disciplinary Tribunal for nursing; is a Fellow and Examiner for the Australasian College of Health Service Management; and partners with Te Arawa Whanau Ora to co-chair the Healthy Families Rotorua initiative. She is a Justice of the Peace and became a Judicial JP in 2013 sitting in both Rotorua and Whakatane Courts. In 2013



Cathy was awarded the Zonta Rotorua Women's Achievement Award.

Cathy comes from a large farming family and is blessed to have two stepdaughters, a whāngai daughter, ten grandchildren and two great granddaughters. One of her life's great adventures was being a Volunteer Service Abroad nurse/midwife in Kiribati for five years in her mid-20s which is where she met her late husband Ray. **In reflecting on her life, Cathy feels very blessed by the Lord for a life filled with a loving family, and many wonderful friends and colleagues, and for God's faithful presence and guidance throughout.**

## DANIEL ALEMANN

Daniel Alemann has attended St John's since 1998, and became an Elder in 2014. He grew up in the youth group, has led children and youth ministries, served as a member of St John's Leadership Team, and is part of the



music worship team . He met and married Kerry at St John's and both his children, James (7) and Sophie (5) have been dedicated at the church.

Daniel's expertise is in architecture and construction. He holds a Masters of Architecture, specializing in ecclesiastic (church) design. He has over ten years experience working in the construction industry for several local companies and runs his own architecture business. He also likes to get hands-on, occasionally renovating residential properties.

Daniel was part of the original concept team to determine the rebuild Eight Principles. His role as co-convenor of the committee is to help get the best outcomes for RDPC and ensure the best result from the engaged professionals. He has used his experience to communicate the needs of the church to the designers, review professional documents, and help draw technical arguments for the insurance claim.

Daniel is the onsite RDPC representative for the build to ensure our goals as a church are realised during the construction of the new St John's. **Daniel says, "Throughout my time on the building committee I have seen that prayers have been answered and I ask for your continued prayers during the construction phase."**

# Eight Principle Rebuild Concept

These principles for design were established shortly after the fire by the St John's congregation. They have been the cornerstone reference during the design process.

Place of God

---

Place of worship

---

Connecting  
with the community

---

Past and  
present and future

---

Flexible and  
functional

---

Multi-cultural  
Multi-generational

---

Welcoming,  
warm and accessible

---

Environmentally aware



Youth Group, for young people from Years 7-12, meets weekly at St John's and is led by RDPC Youth Minister, Mike Leopard.

The three core values of our Youth Ministry are:

- **Community: A safe space to come; be a friend**
- **Faith: Jesus is an important part of what we do**
- **Making memories: to hold onto in a Christian setting no matter where we end up**

Combining these values and focusing on people rather than activities has changed the way we do things on a typical Thursday night and the other adventures we take together.

**Mike says** youth activities have been really difficult to plan in this Covid world. We've tried to keep things simple after multiple interruptions and cancellations, and remind ourselves that it doesn't matter **how** cool our activity is, what matters is **who** we do it with.

Thanks to Covid our youth group ministry time has changed from the past. Instead of

me, Mike, as leader giving a talk, we did "convo on the couch"; asking topical questions in a time where there are a lot of questions. We had five leaders sitting on couches pondering and sharing the different points of view we each hold, showing the variety in our faith, our thinking, and our values. The young people could see everyone had their own answers and thoughts and that's cool; every individual was valued.



We swapped our snow camp for a day at the Leopards' house, and our cancelled tramp in the Coromandel forest park for a computer gaming sleepover at the church. Both were awesome! Here is what a couple of our young people said about it:

In August, the youth group went to Mike's place for a day at the lake and a movie night. At the lake some brave people dared each other to go swimming and pushed each other off the wharf while the rest of us tossed a ball around. Some people we knew from another youth group surprised us there and we caught up with them. Back at Mike's place we lit the bonfire and tried to eat marshmallow ashes as the shadows got longer. Later we went back inside to play Mafia, a murder mystery game that involved my cousin telling us all about his many fictional lawyers and a lot of people being 'killed' in increasingly creative ways. After that we watched a movie which I had already seen but it was fun watching other people's reactions to it. Pizzas arrived halfway through the movie and as usual were gone in a few seconds. Overall, it was a great day and we even got a new in-joke thanks to my cousin. - Isabel

In September a few people from RDPC youth got together for a screens night. We stayed up till 2am playing games, watching movies and eating plenty of food. By 12am we had a few tired grumpy people, so we played a little bit of tag and hide and seek. Overall, we all had a great night bonding as well as ignoring each other. Thank you, Mike, for an awesome night. - Ally

**Going forward, the Youth Group will be looking at stories of Jesus being interrupted. Life this year has been full of interruptions. Jesus' greatest miracles happened when he was interrupted. We want to consider how we can view the current inconveniences and see how God is working in us and in our world.**

# SUPPORT CREW

## Volunteering, serving and keeping 'things' moving

In each edition of *St John's BEACON* we will be getting to know some awesome members of St John's who volunteer their time for a myriad of jobs behind-the-scenes to keep our services and programmes going. This edition we turn the spotlight on Brian (aka Va'inga) and Toni Sinisa.



### Where are you originally from and how did you end up in Rotorua and St John's?

**BRIAN:** I came to NZ from Tonga when I was nine to live with my grandmother in Morningside (bro-town) and moved to Rotorua in 2013 with Toni.

**TONI:** I was born and raised in Rotorua and attended St John's as a child. I have clear memories of the original St John's church that was located on a hill in the city. I loved it when my father was on duty and put the hymn numbers up on the wooden board so everyone knew which songs to sing. We returned to

St John's in 2013. There is something lovely about attending church with so many people from my childhood.

### Tell us a bit more about yourselves:

**BRIAN:** I am one of 15 children. We have two children, Amani (15) and Lia (13). We still visit Auckland often so the children can keep in touch with their Tongan family, and to get our dose of Tongan food when I return to my mother's house. My work background is in IT and I've recently started my own business as a digital marketer. My hobbies include going to the gym with my son, and I can often be found in the garden (leaning on a spade) or fishing

with friends.

**TONI:** I went to Waikato Uni where I completed a degree in French. Immediately after, I bought myself a one way ticket to France and found a job in Paris. The French lifestyle has always been a passion of mine, not only the wine and cheese and pastries but the language and the people. My work background is in hospitality and travel but currently I work at Scion on the reception desk.

### **What volunteer activities do you do for church and why?**

**BRIAN:** I enjoy coffee duty and enjoy chatting to people and getting to know them. I volunteer my time as my wife put me on the roster—but in all seriousness I really enjoy getting to know people.

**I love how St John's is coming up with new interesting ways to connect the church family – this highlights for me the love and care that is St John's – Toni**

**I enjoy coffee duty and enjoy chatting to people and getting to know them – Brian**

**TONI:** I volunteer on the coffee roster. Like Brian I enjoy chatting to people who come up for coffee or tea. It is a good icebreaker and gives you the opportunity to say 'Hi' and to make people feel welcome.

I also help with ICONZ. My son started ICONZ as soon as he turned eight and it is a great group full of fun activities and outings. It is a great Christian based program designed for boys and I can see what a difference this group makes for so many of the boys who attend.

I am part of the Connect Team too, and enjoy getting to know different members of the congregation. I love how St John's is coming up with new interesting ways to connect the church family—this highlights for me the love and care that is St John's.

## **Join the SUPPORT CREW!**

We're always looking for more people to help out with the various activities of St John's.

There are many opportunities to be involved.

These three are really needed at the moment for Sunday mornings:

- **Sound desk operators**
- **Tea and coffee servers**
- **Powerpoint operators**

*For more information please contact the church office*

# CONNECT with us

## Worship Services

**Sunday Service: 10am** Family-oriented, including kid's programmes.

**Wednesday Mid-week Service: 1.30pm** Traditional

## Youth Activities

**Youth Group:** Year 7–12, Thursday 7–9pm

Coordinator: Mike Leopard [youth@rdpc.org.nz](mailto:youth@rdpc.org.nz) or 027 309 5418

**Young Adults:** 16–24 Years old, fortnightly on Mondays 7–9pm

Coordinator: Mike Leopard

**Icoz:** Year 5–8, Tuesday 6.15–7.45pm

Coordinator: Toni Sinisa 027 519 2526

## Home Groups

Study and fellowship in small groups

**APW** monthly at St John's. Jean Bradley 347 0529.

**Women's:** Springfield, Thursday 10am. Judith Martin 027 614 2771

**Men's:** Springfield, Wednesday 7pm. Mark Hunter 349 3781

**Mixed:** Dalbeth Rd, Monday 7.30pm. John Dalbeth 027 448 3479

**Mixed:** Pomare, Tuesday 10am. Rene de Wit 347 6468 or 027 406 9700

## Community Connections

**Sunbeams:** Preschool gym Monday and Tuesday 10–11am

Coordinator: Catherine Phizacklea 027 225 0503

**Café and The Pantry:** Wednesdays 9–11am

Coordinator: Anna White [cfm@rdpc.org.nz](mailto:cfm@rdpc.org.nz) or 027 200 9409.

**Pastoral Care:** Simon Cornwall 027 627 5910 or  
[simon@rdpc.org.nz](mailto:simon@rdpc.org.nz)

Look at the birds of the air;  
they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,  
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.  
Are you not much more valuable than they?

Can any one of you by worrying  
add a single hour to your life?

Do not worry about tomorrow,  
for tomorrow will worry about itself.  
Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:26-27,34





A Member of the Rotorua District Presbyterian Church Family

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**Making Jesus Known by Who We Are**