

BELONGING AT ST ANDREW'S

PART III: STATEMENTS OF FAITH



One of the statements St Andrew's makes which is greatly prized by the community is the following:

WELCOME TO ST ANDREW'S ON THE TERRACE

*Wherever you are on your faith journey,
wherever you have come from and wherever you are going to,
whatever you believe, whatever you do not believe,
you are welcome here.*

You can decide how you will connect!
This set of booklets aims to help with that decision

How has the Church talked about belief recently?

What follows is a timeline of what are called 'statements of faith' or 'confessions of faith' or 'affirmations'. They have been made by or used in the PCANZ over recent times. Through time they show changes in emphasis and theology. Within the last decade, St Andrew's on The Terrace has embraced the 8 points of Progressive Christianity. Later in this booklet are two affirmations of faith drawn from those 8 points. Once you have read this booklet you might like to discuss your reactions with the minister or other members of the community.

What do I have to believe about God?

Some in the St Andrew's community find the word 'God' difficult. It carries a lot of 'baggage.' For many centuries this word has been linked with an 'old grey haired man in the sky' or has been associated with wrath and judgment. For some, 'God' has also been too closely linked with patriarchal understandings of the world.

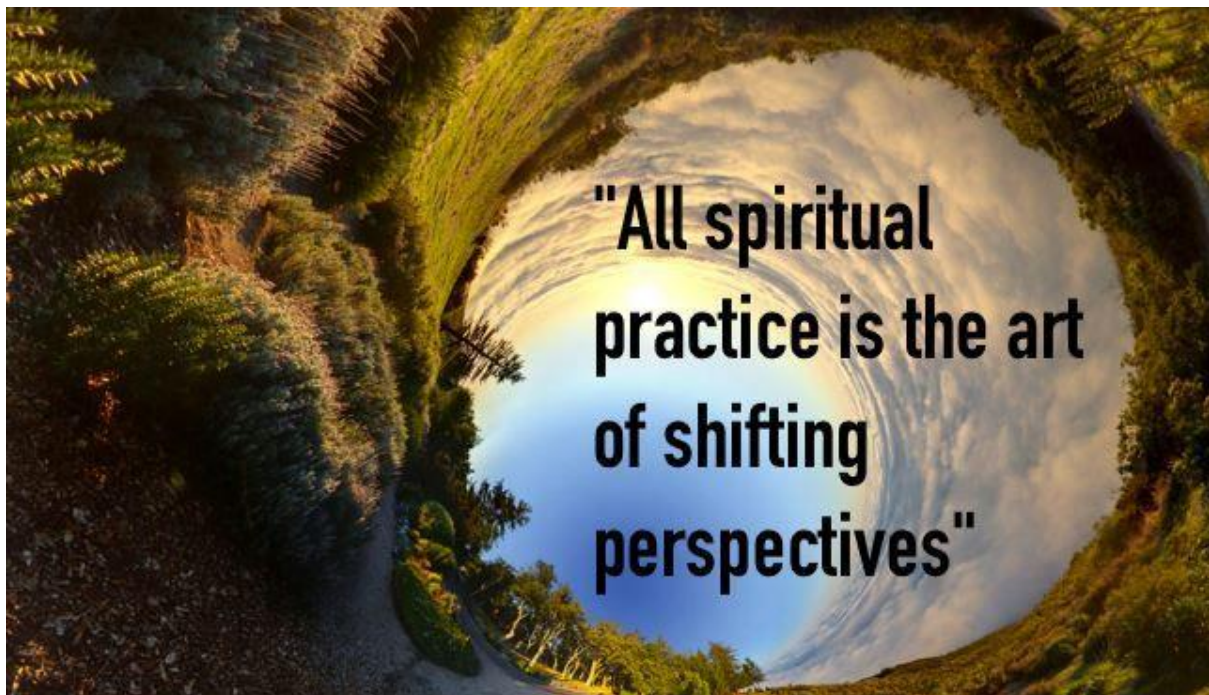
Triumphal words and concepts applied to God also pose difficulties for many at St Andrew's – words such as 'King', 'Lord', 'majesty', 'throne', even 'Kingdom of God'. Some of the following affirmations would not be universally popular at St Andrew's. They're shown here to show how PCANZ and individual ministers and parishes interpret the need to state, in a succinct way, the framework within which they live the spiritual life.

Our faith can go through stages. About midlife, the need to encapsulate faith in definite propositions can become less important. What more becomes our focus is simply living the Way Jesus taught with compassion and good ethical judgment. Finding language to express newer understandings of faith is an on-going project we will probably not complete in our lifetime!

In the pre-modern and modern eras, it seemed important we knew and could state precisely the exact doctrinal stance we were taking. Now, at St Andrew's, and elsewhere, what is more important is trusting the process, walking the Way and showing compassion towards others, so that justice and peace are available to all. This dream of a different world is what Jesus referred to when he spoke of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven – could we say the commonwealth of God? – still working on the language!

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Developing a faith which takes scientific developments into account can sometimes seem to make traditional spiritual practice redundant (such as prayer, bible reading, etc.) This is also an on-going project – what spiritual practices can be used with integrity to support a progressive Christian position? Watch this space! We might need another booklet in the series!



Church statements about belief and faith

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland began in 1560 with the Scot's Confession, a statement of faith following the ideas of Jean (John) Calvin.

<http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/ScotConf.htm>

The Scot's Confession was replaced in 1647 with the Westminster Confession of Faith. (WCF)

[http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf with proofs/](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/)

Both these early confessions of faith are small books with several chapters.

Though written in the same era as the King James' version of the Bible and at the same time Shakespeare wrote, the WCF continues as one subordinate standard of the PCANZ. (A 'subordinate standard' is subordinate to the Bible). Some beliefs in it which lie outside the central core of the reformed faith have not been believed by many Presbyterians since at least 1892.

The 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi caused some introspection in New Zealand and resulted in the General Assembly accepting this affirmation for use in worship

Affirmation of Faith (PCANZ 1993)

Christ Jesus,
Child of Mary, God with us,
King and Suffering Servant,
High Priest and Lamb of God,
Teacher and Word,
living, suffering, dying and rising again,
you challenge, redeem and restore us.

Holy Spirit,
Breath of Life,
Counsellor and Comforter
Fire of God
you inspire, sustain and purify us.
forming us in the nature of Christ
transforming us with your gifts,
you bind us together in one body, your church.

God of all creation,
made known to us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit,
Your boundless love exposes our rebellion and greed
A mother who will not abandon her child,
A father who welcomes the prodigal home,
You forgive, accept and embrace us
And call us into loving communion for ever.

In life and death we belong to you,
everlasting God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



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Frustrated with the lack of further development in creeds and affirmations, many Presbyterian churches used this one from Canada in the early twenty first century

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A New Creed (Uniting Church of Canada)

We are not alone we live in God's world

We believe in God:

who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Last updated: 2010/06/21 Created: 2003/01/05

<http://www.mgc.org/Forms/NewCreed.pdf>

Kupu Whakapono: Concerted work was then carried out in the early 2000s on what many hoped was a replacement for the 1647 Westminster Confession. The KW was accepted, but still placed alongside the WCF as the church's standard of faith both to be regarded as subordinate to the Bible which is seen as the 'supreme rule of life and faith'.

Kupu Whakapono

(The Confession of Faith PCANZ adopted by General Assembly 2010 to accompany the Westminster Confession of Faith as a subordinate standard of the church)

From this land of Aotearoa New Zealand
we confess that we believe in and belong
to the one true and living God,
who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Love before all love.
We believe in God the Father,
sovereign and holy,
Creator and nurturer of all,
Father of Jesus Christ,
sender of the Holy Spirit,
and Judge of all the earth.

We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,
truly human and truly divine,
who lived among us full of grace and truth.
For our sin he was crucified
and by the power of God was raised from death,
forgiving us, setting us free and bringing to birth God's new creation.
Now ascended, he calls us to repentance and faith
and restores us to God and to one another.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
the giver of life at work in all creation,
who inspired the Scriptures and makes Christ known,
who transforms hearts and minds
and gathers us into the community of Christ,
empowering the Church in worship and in mission.

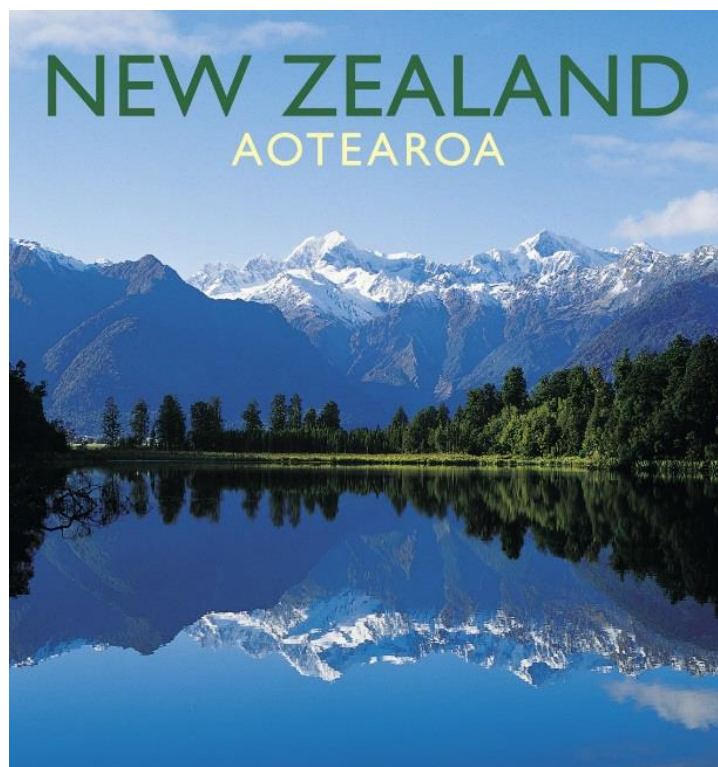
We belong to this triune God,
women and men,
young and old,

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from many nations,
in Christ *he iwi kotahi tatou*, [we are one people]
witnesses to God's love in word and action,
servants of reconciliation,
and stewards of creation.

As God's people,
we look forward in hope and joy
to the return of Christ,
to the new heaven and earth,
where evil and death will be no more,
justice and peace will flourish,
and we shall forever delight in the glory of God.

*The Kupu Whakapono has a commentary which accompanies and interprets it.
See the PCANZ website if you are interested. www.presbyterian.org.nz*



As noted earlier, St Andrew's has embraced the 8 points of progressive Christianity formulated by a group of progressive thinkers, scholars and church people in the USA. These are:

THE 8 POINTS OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

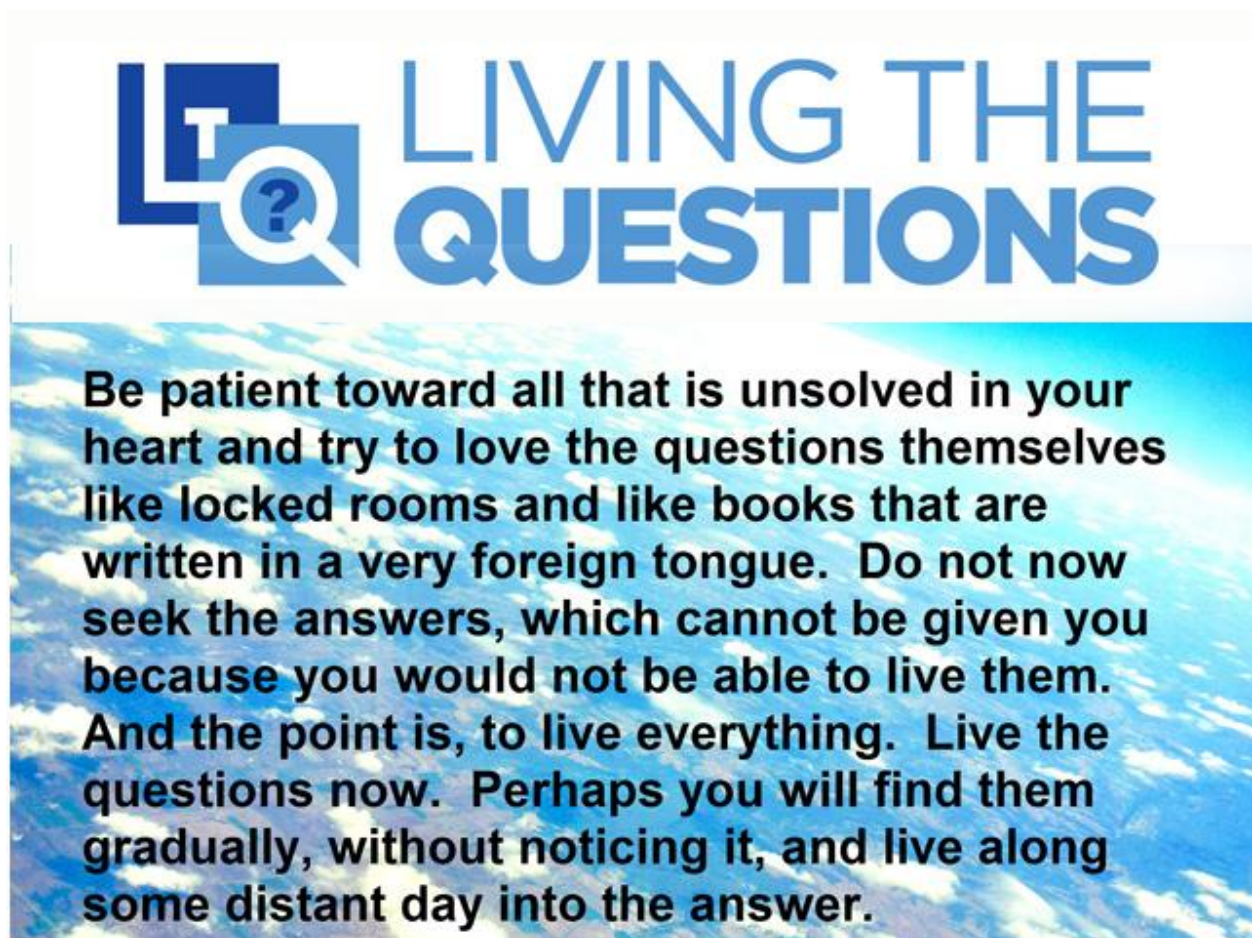
By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to:
 - Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics,
 - Believers and agnostics,
 - Women and men,
 - Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
 - Those of all classes and abilities;



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4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.



(Rainier Maria Rilke)

It seemed that if people wanted to make a statement about their trust in these points, an affirmation developed from them might be needed... Here are two attempts.

AFFIRMATIONS BASED ON THE 8 POINTS OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

(Adapted from the 8 points by Susan Jones, 2015)

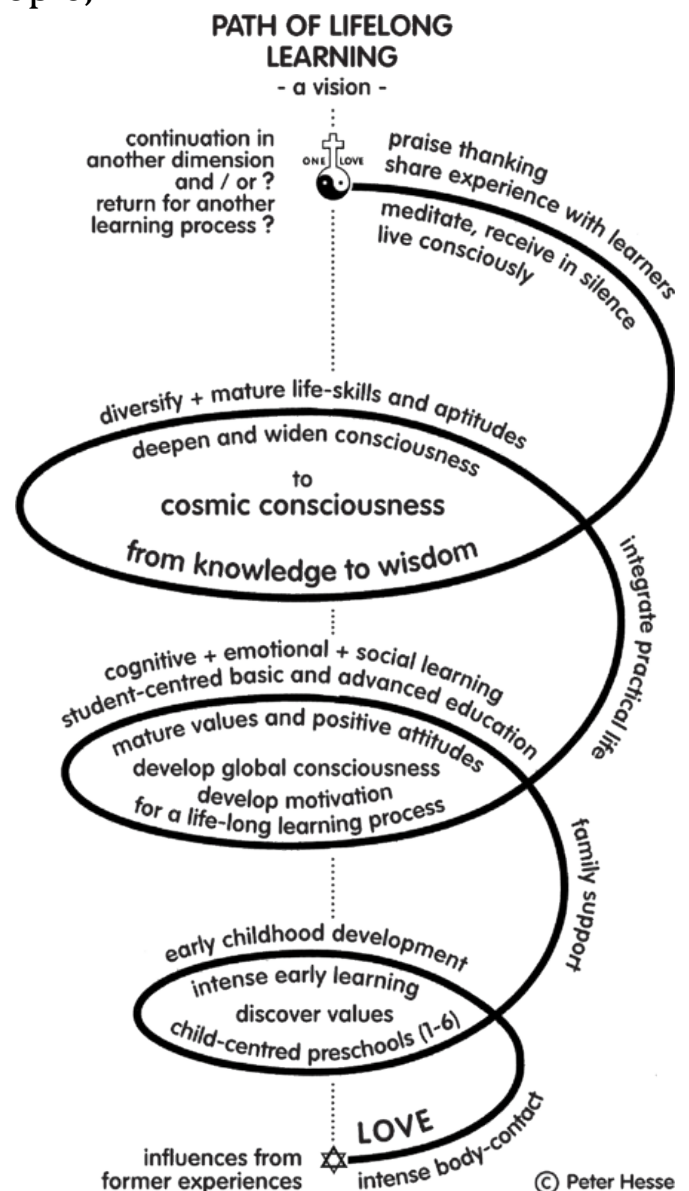
I wish for greater consciousness
through searching within for awareness;
I believe questions are more helpful than absolutes
and diverse sources of wisdom are available to us,

Knowing the true expression of what I believe
is how I behave towards others;
I value community which includes
all types and styles of faith, belief and people;

Seeking the grace
of progress in my spiritual walk;
I commit,
as I am able, to a path
of life-long learning,
compassion, and selfless love.

Seeking understanding
and experience of the Sacred
and the Unity of all life;
I will follow, as I am able,
the spiritual practices
involved in following the Jesus Way

Seeking peace and justice
among all people
and the integrity of our Earth;
I will work, as I am able,
where there is damage and brokenness,
for restoration and reconciliation.



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OR

Seeking to progress in my spiritual walk

I believe diverse sources of wisdom are available to us;
and following the Jesus Way
leads to awareness of the Sacred and the Unity of all life

I value community
which includes all types and styles of faith, belief and people;
and questions more than absolute answers;
and how the search for wisdom and understanding
deepens awareness

I strive, as I am able,
for peace and justice among all people;
to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;

I commit, as I am able,
to a path of life-long learning,
compassion and selfless Love;
knowing the true expression of what I believe
is how I behave towards other people.



Earlier in my ministry, people coming for confirmation (full membership) were encouraged to develop their own 'creeds' or affirmation. The structure used was the older Apostles Creed formulation of 'I believe in God... I believe in Jesus Christ', etc. Those wanting membership were asked to imagine a scenario or activity they enjoyed (basketball, drama, etc.) and write about where they imagine 'God', 'Jesus', 'the Spirit' and 'the Church' fitted there.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL AFFIRMATIONS (c. 2006-2009)

We believe in God

who creates the game of life

sets the rules in place,

manages our team

(encouraging with a scream)

our trainer, coach and referee

We believe in Jesus Christ

an active team player

who shoots the hard shots through his prayer

helps us tackle fearlessly and guard against attackers

his strength makes it hard for the other team

to bring us down

We believe in the Holy Spirit

our fuel-on-the-go

who keeps us in the zone

supports us and backs us up

the team doctor

who tends our injuries when we get hurt.

We believe in the Church

our home stadium

where the congregation cheers us on

where we learn stuff which helps us win

(in the groove when we're on the move)

playing the game of life away from home.



Stanley and Nabila Khokhar Opoho, Dunedin, 2006
(teenage brother and sister, both mad keen on basketball)

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Shakespeare wrote “All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts.”

I believe in God, Creator of that stage
the unsurpassable playwright,
creating comedy, drama, romance, tragedy;
whose script is open to interpretation
speaking to each individual, honouring those who are a part of it.



I believe in Christ, the lighting designer
encompassing me with light,
bringing warmth, love, serenity and faith;
who illuminates my way,
never leaving me in utter darkness,
always showing the beauty of the scenery.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the stage manager,
ready with props and special effects
prompting me if I ever falter;
ensuring I am never alone, but also never complacent,
always teaching me the lessons the playwright is offering.

I believe in the Church, the green room,
to which the Spirit draws me,
revitalizing me for my next step forward;
a place I can relax with like minded people,
awhi mai, awhi atau ‘I support you, we support each other.’

God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Church,
integral aspects of the theatre of faith
necessary for its existence,
for the stage to ever evolve, for the faith to live on.

Meegan Cloughley, Opoho 2007 (twenty-something, lighting manager)

A Trinity I can live with

I love the world
I love the black spaces between the stars, and the craters on the moon
I love hail
I love waterfalls and geysers and big waves roaring and foaming
I love sun-warmed white rocks,
 and little bugs racing away when the sand is disturbed
I love jasmine and hyacinth and roses and lilacs
I love skinny stilt birds digging with long needle beaks
I love kingfisher blue
I love swans
I love soft warm cat fur, and soft dry frog skin
I love orange corals and black ants scurrying around their hills
I love shells splintering into sand at the bottom of the dark sea
I love tigers.
I love the world, God.

I love people
I love babies -- their warm soft heads that smell perfect
I love their tiny hands like stars grasping at shadows, their secret smiles
I love children -- I love their minds working away
I love their silliness and their playtimes and their emotional imbalances
I love helping a crying child to feel better
I love women -- I love their humour, their readiness to tell you where they
 are at the moment, their softness, their practicality, their complexity
I love men -- I love their hairy arms, and how sure they are that they are
 strong enough.
I love their boldness, their romantic ideas, their capacity for philosophy,
 their dreams, their confidence
I love their deep voices
I love people, Jesus.

I love beauty
I love rhythm and music, a flute, a saxophone, a madrigal, reggae
I love buildings, and sculpture, and paintings, and china
I love weaving and tapestry, paper and books
I love soup and crunchy vegetables and chocolate and hot bread
I love kindness and care, medicine and research, ideas and dreams,
 invention
I love faith, belief, trust, and respect

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I love community, I love family,
I love reunions and surprise parties, celebrations and balloons
I love beauty, Spirit.

And God made a wonderful world,
And Jesus loved the people there,
And the Spirit helped them to create beauty,
And it was enough.

Abby Smith (Forty-something, former Unitarian, c. 2007-2009)



You should also know that the community of St Andrew's has chosen these six 'Pillars' to undergird the life and direction of the parish.

Worship: St Andrew's will provide a range of worship experiences at a variety of times during the week. Our worship will enable people to express Christian faith in ways that are participatory, intellectually honest, creative and contextual.

Community and Place: St Andrew's is a caring community, where everyone is valued, and included regardless of age, race, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. We celebrate our common life together. We seek to strengthen our public identity as a progressive, welcoming, thinking church connecting with people in Wellington and NZ.

Theological Education and Reflection: St Andrew's contributes to debate and thinking on spiritual, political, cultural and ethical issues. We value education that makes sense of our lives and our religion, making connections between our personal spiritual journeys and broader theological questions. We endeavour to express faith in ways that connect to our diverse context in Aotearoa in the 21st century. We advocate a theological ethic that empowers people to live sustainably on planet earth. We identify with the world-wide progressive faith movement.

Spirit and the Arts: As a renowned music and arts venue, St Andrew's nourishes the spiritual life of the city. We seek to develop further a ministry that links spirituality and the arts.

Faith in Action: St Andrew's expresses its faith commitments in social justice and service. St Andrew's life is marked by an awareness of and commitment to global peace and justice, including economic and environmental justice. We will work to make a difference in the local community in connecting diverse communities and promoting social cohesion and reconciliation.

Care of Resources: Our buildings have been restored as part of our commitment to being a place of welcome for all people. We will foster a culture of generous giving. The operational finances of St Andrew's will be sound and meet accepted accounting practice standards. The structures and processes of the church will be efficient and effective in responding to needs and opportunities. We will be responsible and caring employers of the people who work at St Andrew's including being a Living Wage employer.

Lots to think about! – If you were to write your own 'creed' based on 'I believe in God... Jesus... Spirit ... Church' from a scenario from life about which you are passionate, what would you write? Questions? Ask anyone at St Andrew's!