

Spanz



Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

JUNE 2009, ISSUE 39

Doom and gloom?

What our churches are seeing

www.presbyterian.org.nz

Economic crisis needs spiritual solutions



Andrew Bradstock

It's natural to look for someone to blame for our current economic ills. The media has been bashing our financial institutions and their directors, and the marchers in London were clear about who they thought were the culprits with their chants of "burn a banker".

We all want to know what went wrong and see those who deserve it getting their just desserts. But more valuable in the long run will be an appreciation of the lessons that can be learned – because if there's any upside at all to this crisis, it's the opportunity it gives us to reflect on our values and consider how to create a more sustainable future.

Along with doing all we can to support those hardest hit, putting the resources of our faith into the public square is one of the most important contributions we can make, as churches, to the crisis. Scripture has much to say about the factors that have brought us to where we are, and equips us to offer compelling arguments, vision and policy to the debate about the economy of the future. What can we say?



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First we must stress that change is necessary, that "more of the same" is not the answer. At the heart of the Christian Gospel is the need for *metanoia* (or repentance), and there are things about the present system for which we need to repent – all of us who have benefited from them, not just "greedy bankers".

We need to highlight the social dimension of the market. One root of our present crisis is that we have seen ourselves as autonomous consumers, using the market to satisfy our own wants without regard to the consequences for ourselves or others. Scripture stresses the importance of community and interdependence, with markets playing a vital role in preserving social harmony.

The Jubilee laws in Leviticus, for example, aimed to ensure that no one lacked the basic necessities of life. Community spirit was broken when even one member was on the breadline. Another threat to the wellbeing of the community was the presence of huge disparities in wealth, something the Jubilee also sought to redress. Interestingly, recent independent research by British academics Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett has demonstrated how narrowing the gap between rich and poor in a society produces a stronger and more stable community.

The sabbath principle of taking a regular break from work and economic activity is worth revisiting – not least in the light of Government plans to allow employees to cash in a week of their annual holidays. The loss of one day in the week when trading effectively ceased has not only had consequences for family life but signalled our shift to a fully consumer-driven culture. As current research is reminding us, wellbeing and happiness can never be achieved solely by consuming. Theology has much to contribute to that conversation.

And what about the mantra that we must have economic growth? We have known for years that our planet is not resourced to enable all its inhabitants to have the standard of living we enjoy in the West, yet we have done nothing to cut back on our consumption. As Malcolm Irwin of the Salvation Army has recently argued, we badly need a "theology of enough", which focuses on what we already have and what we can share. The planet is not ours to exploit but a gift from God that we hold on trust. Can we get more currency for the language of stewardship and gratitude over and against that of greed and acquisition?

As some influential thinkers are pointing out, at root we are in a spiritual crisis that will need fresh solutions from fresh sources. Already we are seeing a return to the language of values – witness the speeches by prime ministers Rudd and Brown on the eve of the G20. Commentators are also talking seriously about how practically we can create a more sustainable and just global economy.

We in the churches have much to offer, too, and must be at the heart of the debate.

Andrew Bradstock became the Howard Paterson Professor of Theology and Public Issues at the University of Otago in January. Before this, he was co-director of the Centre for Faith and Society at the Von Hugel Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

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Australasian Religious Press
Association Awards 2008
Most improved publication:
Silver Award

The Right Rev Dr Graham Redding contributes a regular column to *Spanz*

Moderator's Musings

A lot of people have been asking me how the Church is responding to this economic recession.

It seems to me there are at least three levels of response.

The first is that of offering immediate practical support to those who need it in these troubled times. Christian social service agencies and local congregations can share in this task.

The second level is that of political advocacy. On 8 April, leaders from the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Assembly of God and Salvation Army churches met with Prime Minister John Key and Minister of Finance Bill English to discuss practical responses to the local social impacts of the global economic crisis, especially on lower-income families, and to shape some priorities that can be supported by Churches and their social service agencies. We said that it is just as important for New Zealand to emerge from the recession with a robust society as it is to emerge with a robust economy, and that to achieve this we will need policies that have a long-term focus. We left the meeting confident that a purposeful dialogue has been entered into with the government. The Prime Minister said that he welcomes the Church's ongoing feedback and input.

The third level consists of theological reflection and critique. What is the real nature of this crisis? Is it just economic, and therefore fixable through economic policies, or is it something more? What are the deeper questions we should be asking?

In this regard, it seems to me that from a faith perspective, the current economic order fails to account for three significant truths about our humanity. The first is the possibility that our humanity might have a higher purpose than the pursuit of individual happiness. The second is the possibility that freedom might consist of something more than the freedom to acquire and consume. The third is the reality of sin.

When the Westminster Catechism defines the chief end of our humanity in terms of knowing God and enjoying God forever, it implies that our humanity has a certain directedness about it, which we deny at our peril. Our ultimate desire or appetite should be for God. But two of the consequences of sin are the redirection of desire towards



Neil Mackenzie

lesser realities and the forging of idolatrous loyalties. Our insatiable appetite for consumer goods, and the consequent failure to distinguish between wants and needs, is a sign not of our freedom but of our captivity.

From a faith perspective, the notion of "retail therapy" is nonsensical. Like other forms of self-indulgence, it constitutes nothing more than a temporary distraction; an expression of modernity's narcissistic tendencies and ultimately unsustainable lifestyles. As the prophet Isaiah asked so many years ago, why spend your money on, and labour for, things that will not satisfy?

The current economic crisis provides us with an opportunity to reflect on these kinds of realities, to ask questions about the nature, sustainability and consequences of the current economic order, and to ponder what a different ordering of our priorities and commitments might look like. I have no doubt that we will find considerable support for this task.

When leaders from the world's 20 biggest economies met in London recently, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in Britain, France, Germany and Italy to protest about the economic crisis and urge world leaders to act on poverty, jobs and climate change. The protest gave voice to a deep sense of unease that many people around the world feel in relation to certain aspects of globalisation and the current global economic system.

Through the Bible and a rich heritage of theological reflection and alternative patterns of living, it seems to me that the Church is particularly well placed to offer the kind of thinking and critique that is needed at this critical time.

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Foreign labour sparks...
investors...
A time of crisis...
hedging st...
point to layoffs...
seeks speedy job aid...
3.8%...
outlook looks gloom...
king crises...
COMPANIES FORCED TO CU...
time of crisis...
Media beat-up
or reality?
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beat of layoffs and losses...
U.S. ... contracts...
Profit slip...
record loss in 2008...
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03 hedging loss \$177m...

Recession news is impossible to miss. Every day, another statistic reveals greater depths to our economic gloom. But when you start to ring people and ask them how their church and community are faring, it's a different story. Some, particularly in rural areas, say they are yet to see any tangible signs. They wonder if the media is feeding the recession and distrust its coverage. Bad news creates its own momentum, they suggest. Where does the truth lie? Amanda Wells reports

We can't ignore the mass of negative statistics. A New Zealand Institute of Economic Research survey released in March suggests that the recession will be deeper than first forecast, with firms' views of their own business activity from January to March 2009 the most negative since the 1970s. Intentions towards staffing levels were the worst since 1991. And while house prices have already fallen more than 8 percent since their peak in mid 2007, the Reserve Bank has predicted a 20 percent plunge between that peak and the end of next year.

If you think these statistics sound scary, consider the global economy. A United Nations survey predicts a global economic contraction of 1 percent during 2009. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development expects global trade volumes to slump by 13 percent this year, and its member economies to shrink by an average of 4.3 percent. US house prices have lost nearly a third of their value since their 2006 peak.

Some anecdotes from around New Zealand paint a picture of cautious Kiwis hedging their bets against what may come. Like having a camping holiday close to home rather than travelling overseas. The Rev Karl Lamb, who's minister of Lakeside Church in Te Anau, says the camping ground operators in his congregation reported far more Kiwis staying during the Christmas period than ever before.

Some people decided not to holiday at all. The Rev Nathan Parry of Island Bay Presbyterian says his Christmas day service attracted 50 percent more attendees than usual – not because of visitors but because “our own people had chosen not to go on holiday”. Wellington's large number of government employees are feeling particular uncertainty about the future, he says.

In Dunedin, the Rev Tokerau Joseph of First Church says he can see the effects of the economy on his church. Some people in the Pacific Island congregation have been hit by a downturn in manufacturing and consequent redundancies from big names like Fisher & Paykel and Cadbury. They then face pressure to move away from Dunedin in search of new opportunities, Tokerau says. Younger people are starting to consider looking overseas.

It's not just those in the manufacturing sector seeing an impact, Tokerau says. Some people in management roles have lost jobs or face an uncertain future.

But people are also seeing an opportunity to try something different, like returning to tertiary study or embarking on it for the first time. “Overall folk are trying very hard to see the positive in this.”

Many people prefer not to make their financial situation a topic of conversation, Tokerau says. “But we know that some folk are affected more than others. We keep our ears open and make sure we are available if people want to talk about it.”

Another minister, who preferred not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation, said that many in his congregation, in a dairy farming area, were concerned about the current climate.

“It is not a good time. We have our share of those who have been made redundant; they come to you for counselling and have issues that are not only beyond your scope but beyond the resources that are available to help.”

There is an understandable tension between farmers and farm workers in the congregation. “We have the problem of those who have been working on farms being laid off, and then farmers suddenly having to cope with a lot more of the work themselves.”

“When you operate a farm and times are hard, the first thing you do is do the jobs that you can do yourself and reduce the number you employ. When you do jobs that you have not been doing, it takes away from family time, it takes energy, and sooner or later you find you are moving into a stressful situation.” Relationships are put under pressure and some have broken up as a result, he says.

A city minister reports that his congregation had 10 people looking for work; people who had recently graduated, retrained or returned from overseas but were finding the job market tight. This equated to 10 percent of the congregation.

But these negative tales contrast with reports from other, mainly provincial, regions.

The Rev Robyn McPhail, minister of Kaeo/Kerikeri Union Church, says this year has not seen a noticeable increase in anxiety. “We're not actually talking about the recession.”

Many people in the region already struggle financially on a day-to-day basis, relying on seasonal work and benefits, Robyn says, and the recession hasn't changed that. “They live on the breadline anyway.”

High petrol prices last year had a more noticeable impact, she says. “People were running out of petrol all the time and not making it to places.”

The 2008 collapse of finance companies also significantly affected Kerikeri, with a number of elderly people suffering. “We were quietly aware that people had a big change in their financial situation. We've had people move away who needed to live somewhere more affordable.”

Some parts of the coast near Kerikeri have seen a property boom, and “there's an awareness that's slowing down”. But most people don't appear to be anxious about their jobs.

Talking to her rural networks around the country, the main topics of conversation are still the weather and people's health, Robyn says. Most farmers are quietly confident of weathering any difficulties, particularly with the improvement in commodity prices such as lamb.

In Kaeo, the church is rebuilding a hall damaged in the 2007 flood. “We're aware that what we do in the community sends its own message. We're not pulling our heads in.”



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The Rev Dennis Flett, of Knox Presbyterian in Waitara, says Taranaki's relative isolation means it's self sufficient in many respects, and at the moment there's not a great deal of concern about the downturn. The huge reserves of oil in the area lead to a degree of confidence, and while property prices have remained static, they have not fallen significantly.

Despite being a low socioeconomic area, Waitara has low unemployment. Its freezing works shut eight years ago, with big job losses, but the plant has since successfully reopened to manufacture small goods such as hamburger patties. Most people in the congregation aren't high income earners, Dennis says, but Waitara is only 13km from New Plymouth and many commute to work in the Bell Block industrial area.

He says they're hearing more about the recession in the media than they're seeing its effects. "It hasn't really affected us; we wonder when it will."

Even though the milk payment is down from last year, it's still strong compared to previous years, Dennis says, and farmers are quietly optimistic about the long term demand for milk products, particularly in the developing world.

The Rev Rachel Judge in Ashburton is similarly positive. "Everybody is saying Ashburton is not as badly off as other places."

Rachel says many in the community have expressed concern about media reporting of the recession and its accuracy. A local business leader, who's also a member of Rachel's congregation, says conditions aren't as gloomy as the media is suggesting.

Like Robyn in the Far North, Rachel says the collapse of finance companies and the rate of Fonterra's milk solids payout have had much more immediate effects.

Ashburton has benefited from the dairying boom, with improved job options and low levels of unemployment. Those who have recently converted to dairy are feeling the effects of lower payout, Rachel says, though this may take a couple of years to have an effect on local employment.

"I hear concern from parents of younger farmers who have recently converted."

There is also some concern from parents that children at university or about to graduate might have difficulty finding jobs.

But being provincial and being farming-based "will help cushion us," she says. There are still building projects going on and new housing areas being developed.

"People want to refute some of the gloom."

Te Anau's the Rev Karl Lamb says at the moment most people are saying "what recession?"

Te Anau is heavily dependent on the international tourism industry, which so far has been down only slightly. Most people visiting during the current season had booked six months ago, before the extent of the global financial crisis was obvious.

But forward bookings for next year are significantly down. Some people are worried, Karl says, but others are questioning whether the situation is being inflated by the constant negative media reports. "People are saying a lot of this is because of the media."

"When I talk to tourists visiting from the United Kingdom, they certainly tell us how bad things are. We really haven't seen it here."

The church runs the community foodbank and has noticed a significant increase in donations recently, Karl says. "People are saying, 'you'll need it because of the recession'".

But, in reality, demand hasn't increased, and the donations are being kept for a time of need. Spanz

So how can we help?

In March, Television New Zealand ran a news item suggesting a recession would drive people into churches, with tough times prompting people to seek low-cost forms of help.

Federation of Family Budgeting Services chief executive Raewyn Fox says **foodbanks** are key means by which churches support their communities.

Training to be a **volunteer for a budget service** is another way that churchgoers can help, she says. "We really need volunteers who are prepared to spend some time training". More information is available at www.familybudgeting.org.nz

Simple **support for people who are struggling** is important; as well as a recognition that people's presence at church is more important than their financial offerings. An analysis by the Church Property Trustees of trends during the 1930s Depression shows that church attendance dropped off when people's resources were stretched, and suggests that careful thought needs to be given to appeals for increased offerings.

Zimbabwean minister finds home in Taranaki

Working long hours in a factory and not seeing the sun rise or set has been just one of the unexpected experiences of the Rev Amos Muzondiwa since he came to New Zealand from Zimbabwe.

Amos, who is the new minister at Inglewood United Church, Taranaki, found that on arriving in New Zealand he had to wait a year for an appointment with the Presbyterian Church (there were problems obtaining Amos's certificate of good standing from Zimbabwe, due to the political situation there affecting communications), so he took work at Coca Cola in Auckland, as a machine operator.

"That was an eye opener," he says. "I was able to interact with lots of different people and experience the multicultural make-up of New Zealand. I got to know about the Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Pakeha and Palagi. It was initially confusing, as I came from a country where you just have white and black Zimbabweans.

"Also, the way that work is done here is very different from Africa," where factories don't operate round the clock and the attitude to work is different. "People work 8am to 5pm and it does not matter if you have days off from work, you are still paid for the month. You can afford to be sick. But here if you do not work, you are not paid.

"The other difference I have found is climate; in Africa it is hot and the days are always around the same length, but New Zealand winter makes it dark at 6am and 6pm so you go to work in the dark and return home in the dark."

Amos says he did not tell people that he was a minister when he began work at Coca Cola but it became known. "There's a lot of swearing in that kind of environment. Some of the people who had said some things tried to take them back when they found out I am a minister!"

In early 2009, Amos was called to Inglewood United Church and he was inducted on 22 January. Amos says he



Amos Muzondiwa (right) with his wife Nyembezi and daughters Shalom (left) and Takunda

and his family (wife Nyembezi, and his daughters Shalom and Takunda) have been warmly welcomed into the township. "Inglewood is great; far friendlier than Auckland because everyone has time for one another". He has been impressed with the town's facilities. "Africans love athletics and there is an athletic stadium here. I love soccer". Amos says playing in a local soccer game he was on the receiving end of a particularly aggressive tackle (he did not respond in kind) and heard someone surprise the attacking player with, "you are kicking our minister!"

Another surprise for Amos has been the warm ecumenical support he has found in Inglewood. "There is genuine friendship amongst the ministers from all the churches, and that has been brilliant."

Not so brilliant, says Amos, is the affect of the recession on Inglewood. He says these are hard times for his congregation, with the economy hitting their rural community hard.

Amos says he understands how worried many in his congregation are, but that

he can also look at the issues from the perspective of someone who has seen far worse. "I have come from a country where unemployment is currently 90 percent. There is [in Zimbabwe] 230 million percent inflation and prices of goods increase three times in a day."

Raised in a strong Methodist family (both his parents were preachers) Amos says that he grew up in very tough times. "I am the eighth of 12 children and we were raised during the [Zimbabwe War of Liberation]." Whatever else they lacked, it was not faith and today two of his siblings are also pastors in the Methodist Church.

As a minister in Zimbabwe, Amos says, "political tensions were high and there was much violence in the area".

Amos' wife Nyembezi is a nurse and came to New Zealand to work for one year. "We felt New Zealand would be a good for our family so in late 2007 I asked the Methodist Church for permission to come here, we arrived early 2008 and we have no regrets."

By Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

Visiting scientist challenges Christians on climate change

As a Christian and a scientist, Dr Bob White takes a hard line on climate change, asking why we have been so slow to take action on an issue that hurts our global neighbours.

Bob was in New Zealand recently as guest speaker at seminars on “climate change, science, and religion”. He talks on the subject of climate change and Christian responsibilities with some authority; being Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom and Associate Director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion. Bob is also the co-author of the 2007 book *Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living*.

At his Victoria University of Wellington seminar in March, Bob was armed with some startling facts: combined searches on Google (through power usage) contribute to global warming as much as all plane travel; cows contribute 18 percent of global warming, more than all the world’s transport; 43 percent of New Zealand’s greenhouse gases come from cattle and sheep; the best thing that New Zealanders can do to reduce global warming is eat less meat. Bob says this is something that he has done and has found difficult; “I love meat but I now eat it once or twice a week”.

For New Zealand, Bob foresees our big global warming issue being climate refugees. “Because everyone has the same rights to the Earth’s resources, this is a moral and ethical issue that we affluent peoples are causing,” he says.

So why then is contemporary Christian environmental concern so muted on these issues? “Perhaps”, says Bob, “some Christians have considered the environment secondary to more important matters of evangelism, and I say that as an evangelical Christian. Maybe some have felt the need to distance themselves from “being seen as Green” because they thought others would associate them with paganism or New Age spirituality. Whatever the reason, the result is that the environmental flag has



Dr Bob White

been flown by the largely secular Green movement.”

Bob says that whilst some Christians are resistant to environmental concerns, the secular media can be similarly unwelcoming. “I was being interviewed on the radio about some of the things that people can do to cut emissions. I replied that most car trips are less than 2 km, so people should walk more and leave the car at home. The interviewer said, ‘Professor White you are on DRIVE TIME RADIO!’ and promptly cut me off”.

Bob says that from a Scriptural perspective, Christians should be leading the environmental agenda. “The existence of our universe is the result of God’s creative activity. God shows his commitment to the material world not only by upholding it moment by moment, but by becoming incarnate in it and taking a human body with all its limitations, in the person of Jesus”.

We are living in a fallen world and much of the world’s pain and its suffering are a direct result of human sinfulness, Bob says.

“There is sufficient food in the world to feed everyone, yet we allow food stockpiles to grow in one part of the world while people starve in another; people in one country die for lack of common medicines while medical resources go to needless cosmetic surgery.”

It is time for Christians to recognise the problems we face and act, Bob says. “We live on a planet of finite resources and what you do in your own backyard, such as using gas-fuelled barbecues for example, has a global impact. It’s a sad fact that those who suffer most from the consequences of climate change had no say in my contributing activities.”

“Christians in high-income countries can hardly claim to be loving their global neighbour when the consequences of their actions may lead to suffering and an increased probability of an early death elsewhere. To refuse to do so when the consequences of our actions are already clear is not only reckless but sinful.”

By Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

Carlton takes on new youth strategy role

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand's new Youth Ministry Development Leader says faith communities are still very important to young people, even if they become disillusioned by their experiences with churches.

Carlton Johnstone has just finished a PhD looking at why Generations X and Y go to church, why they change churches, and how life experience and their own faith journey affects these choices.

"People are looking for a community to belong to; one that they connect with and relate to. Relationships are very important."

Conversely, denominations become less meaningful and aren't seen as a strong source of identity, he says "because people don't appreciate the distinctions".

"This is something that's been lost that could be regained and add some strength."

Young people aren't just after a spiritual experience, Carlton says. "That's not enough anymore for a lot of people. They want more in terms of preaching; they want theological depth." If worship lyrics don't reflect their reality, after a while they will begin to disconnect from worship.

Carlton, who's 37, says when he started the job in April he knew virtually nothing about Presbyterianism, but is now starting to appreciate its points of difference.

It's been a while since a full-time youth ministry person has been based in Wellington. For the past couple of years, there's been a team approach, with Stephanie Redhead in Gore coordinating PYM work. Steph is now working for the Synod of Otago and Southland, and the Church is looking for someone to fill the vital coordination role that she played.

Carlton's newly created role has a more strategic focus, which he describes as "thinking about how we do what we do and how we might be able to do it better". Like Kids Friendly's Jill Kayser, Carlton will be working with churches to help them attract a particular, missing age group.



Carlton Johnstone, new Youth Ministry Development Leader, checks out record store Real Groovy, which is across the road from Assembly Office in Wellington

Apart from Assembly Office's proximity to the cafes of Cuba Street, Carlton says he was attracted to the role because it's a good fit with his skills and training, as well as because of its strategic potential.

"I have a heart to serve and strengthen the Church. It's quite an exciting role in terms of some of the possibilities."

Obvious challenges facing the Presbyterian Church include its lack of youth, Carlton says. "Another challenge is increasing the viability of youth ministry as a career option." Youth ministers and workers need to be appropriately valued and trained, he says.

The focus of his first few months in the job will be meeting and talking to people, "to gain an evaluation of the current situation on a national level and see where culture change is required".

Carlton's role will involve working with sessions, churches and presbyteries; he'll work closely with the national youth coordinator, whose role is more about maintaining the existing youth ministry structure, when someone is employed in this role.

During his first two months, Carlton's visited Auckland, Whakatane, Tauranga, Rotorua, Dunedin, Southland, and Christchurch, as well as spending time at his Wellington base. Along with his wife Sarah, an environmental engineer, Carlton relocated from Auckland to take up the new role.

As well as his studies, which include a Masters degree in Sociology, Carlton has worked as a youth pastor at Mt Albert Baptist Church in Auckland, and spent a year in North Africa with Operation Mobilisation, which is an interdenominational mission organisation that focuses on parts of the world that have not encountered the Gospel. Prior to this he'd completed theological training at the Baptist Church's Carey College.

Carlton has also spent some time as a full-time competitive cyclist, but says his biking these days is more about fitness than racing. **By Amanda Wells** [Spanz](#)

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Presbyterians find fellowship in Christian cops network

If trends in the United States and Britain are replicated here, the recession will bring an increase in crime, especially in rural areas, and place even bigger demands on our police.

During difficult times, faith-based communities can play a key role in supporting police officers. In 2005, a group of New Zealand Christian police staff expressed their concern that no uniquely Christian support was available in their workplace.

In response, the Police Christian Support Network was created and for the past four years has helped staff nurture their faith and work through faith-based, work-related issues. The Network is officially recognised by the NZ Police but does not receive financial support.

To date, the Network has worked mostly at a local level to connect Christian staff, offering support and organising activities that are often social. This year, for the first time, Network members will gather together for a national event, the Police Christian Support Network National Conference, to be held from 16-18 October at Wanganui Central Baptist Church.

Networks chairperson Inspector Fiona Prestidge, Area Commander of New Plymouth Police, is the wife of the Rev Paul Prestige, minister of St James' Presbyterian Church, New Plymouth. Interestingly, Fiona is not the only police officer in the St James' congregation; Constable Andrew Wong Too, Section Constable of New Plymouth Police, and Detective Constable Drew Bennett of Stratford Police also attend St James' and the Police Christian Support Network.

Fiona says her work colleagues have always known about her faith because she is married to a minister and because she talks about

"ordinary stuff such as going to church". Both Christians and non-Christians have often expressed surprise, she says, that she is a cop married to a minister, but this itself surprises her. "I see no disconnect at all. To me our jobs share a lot in common – we're both leaders in the community."

When she was a "frontline cop," Fiona says her faith presented more of a challenge for her colleagues. "Not that I was hassled for it, but often it would be that colleagues simply had no understanding of faith things so it tended to be a conversation stopper". Despite this, Fiona says she feels "very comfortable talking about Christian things with colleagues, although the reality is that it is usually just a passing reference rather than a significant conversation".

In her early years of policing, Fiona felt some pressure around being identified as a Christian but after 24 years in the police and moving up the ranks, she feels she has "matured both in my faith and my confidence as a police officer and I don't feel peer pressure now".

As a member of the Network's conference organising team, Fiona hopes that those attending take away "encouragement to be proud and confident of being a Christian in police. I'd love to see the conference be a catalyst for the Network to develop further, with more pockets of Christians meeting in police stations up and down the country".

The conference was the idea of Kelly Scarrow, who is the wife of a police officer. Two years ago Kelly's husband attended Police College and brought home Police Christian Support Network newsletters. She says: "I read testimonies from around the country that are amazing. There are instances where a Christian cop was able to get a difficult offender to talk after colleagues had given up,



From left: Inspector Fiona Prestidge (Area Commander, New Plymouth Police), Detective Constable Drew Bennett (Stratford Police), in plain clothes, Constable Andrew Wong Too (Section Constable, New Plymouth Police), in uniform

just because the offender was treated with Christian compassion, dignity and respect. That is not to say Christian cops are not tough and just, but they have the ability to see the broken, sick, often rejected or abused person behind the unlawful behaviour. Because of this they go the extra mile. Reading these testimonies it struck me how important the role our police play is, and how many Christian police must feel isolated and unsupported in this daunting task."

Kelly says she contacted Fiona, and explained that she felt prompted by God to coordinate a national conference. "The Network's executive committee then met, prayed and here we are."

Fiona's appreciation of the Network and what it can offer is shared by her colleague Constable Andrew Wong Too. He finds the Network's email newsletter very encouraging. "Being a relatively new cop, I enjoy reading the stories of those who have been through the challenges and have great stories to tell."

As someone new-ish to police culture, Andrew says he hasn't felt pressured at work over his faith. "I don't think people say, 'there's Andrew the Christian'. The pressure would only come if I was doing things people thought a Christian shouldn't do! Some give you a bit of stick for going to church instead of going to sleep after a busy Saturday night, but I've found it to be pretty light-hearted".

Andrew says that living out his faith helps him to stay positive. "It would be easy to become cynical in this job and begin to give up on people. The challenge is to stay hopeful with the person you continually deal with for domestic violence yet balance that with the reality that a lifetime of behaviour is extremely hard to change. That's why I have to have faith in the love of Christ".

Detective Constable Drew Bennett has also found that his faith has had a huge impact on his work as a detective. "I like to think it comes through in the empathy I have for all those I deal with, whether they be a victim or an offender".

Drew says that during his time at Police College, a trainer had a significant impact on him and he still remembers the advice he was given. "He was a Christian and he spoke to our class about how to deal with people. He said that even if someone has done the worst thing, try to imagine they are your brother, cousin, friend and imagine how you would want them to be dealt with. That's how I operate".

Having grown up in the church, with both his parents ministering in the Salvation Army, Drew has no problem discussing his faith with his colleagues. "I've had some interesting conversations with colleagues on different issues that have arisen and I bring the slant of my faith to that conversation."

For example, Drew says his faith helps him to feel compassion for offenders who have committed terrible crimes and he has had many debates with colleagues about this. "I generally find out that offenders were victims when they were young and never had a chance, and knowing that doesn't make it right but it does help me to understand."

Drew says he became involved in the Police Christian Support Network through talking with Fiona at church. "Fiona offered to put me onto the Network knowing that it would be something I would be interested in. For me the Network is more social. I have good mates who are Christians and cops."

By Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

New Kids Friendly co-ordinator makes her mark

Kids Friendly

has made its second national appointment, with Lorraine Morgan becoming its new co-ordinator. Lorraine will be working closely with Auckland-based national Kids Friendly coach Jill Kayser, but will continue to live in the South Island town of Geraldine.

Lorraine says she is extremely happy to bring her many years of experience working with children to this “dream role”. Having long served the community of Geraldine as the children and families co-ordinator at St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Lorraine will now divide her time between Kids Friendly and St Andrew’s.

“I will be working 20 hours per week for each and I am very excited because this is something that I have wanted to do for some time”.

Jill Kayser says that Kids Friendly is thrilled to welcome Lorraine, and that she will be invaluable in contributing to new developments.

Since starting her co-ordinator role in February, Lorraine has been involved in helping Jill plan the first Kids Friendly national networking and training conference in June; the second Kids Friendly coaching clinic, which was run in Taranaki in March; and the Kids Friendly pilot leadership - development camp “Transformers – Raising-up Young Leaders Camp”, which was held in April. The camp, for “tweens” (aged nine to 12 years) and their mentors, aimed to help the tweens explore how they can influence their church and communities as leaders modelled on Jesus.

“Transformers is a very exciting initiative” says Lorraine. “The camp came out of Jill being repeatedly approached with the question, ‘where are our leaders?’ Transformers is the Kids Friendly response; let’s grow our own leaders. The camps will utilise a mix of workshops, drama and



“We cancelled the Father’s Day church service and went to the park, and the Geraldine community came with us”

puppetry for engaging and fun exploration. I say ‘camps’ because we hope that this first Transformers camp will plant a seed that becomes a second Transformers camp this time next year. If we can continue to work with the same tweens, and develop them, we could stick with them all the way to youth ministry. Eventually, we would like to increase the age of those attending the camps; perhaps each year the camp is for a different age group.”

Working in a creative and innovative way is important for engaging children and families, says Lorraine. She offers a recent example of how doing church “differently” resulted in a hugely successful event for her entire community.

“Different things work in different communities, so I don’t say that this would work everywhere, but for us it was wonderful: something that children, fathers and mothers really loved.

“We cancelled the Father’s Day church service and went to the park, and the Geraldine community came with us.”

Lorraine says that she advertised the free Father’s Day event in local newspapers, at schools, the cinema; she even stuck posters in the fish and chip shop. Wherever she could publicise the St Andrew’s-sponsored Family Fun Day, she did.

“We made it clear that the family day was for everyone, including solo mother and solo father families. We didn’t know how many would come but to our delight the park was packed at 10am. We ran out of barbequed sausages after giving out 400. We had an Argo jeep and petrol donated for the day, so we had free rides at the river that were a big hit; there were motorbike rides, trucks, a bouncy castle, the church band played.

“The feedback was wonderfully positive. The Family Fun Day was so successful the town council has asked if St Andrew’s will make it an annual event.”

By Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

Timaru churches commit to one-parish concept

A very special summit was held in Temuka in March that resulted in four Presbyterian churches committing to becoming a single parish with four congregations.

The vote at the Churches in Timaru Summit 09 delivered a very big YES to Trinity, St Stephen's, Chalmers and St Paul's churches working together towards becoming one parish, in order to be more effective in mission.

The Rev Helen Martin, who led the transitional group with the Rev Ian Hyslop, says 89, 86, 73 and 95 percent of each church respectively voted in favour of the commitment, which she describes as "quite a remarkable result".

Ian, moderator of the Presbytery of South Canterbury, says the Presbyterian parishes in Timaru have been on a journey together for the past couple of years "looking at ways of being more effective in ministry and mission".

"The Rev Bryan Gilmour, a transitional minister from the Uniting Church in Australia, has been working alongside the Timaru parishes for nine months, meeting with small groups of folk to share their dreams for the Church."

A highlight of the summit day, Helen says, was the talk given by guest speaker

Moderator the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding. "Graham spoke about the present reality of post-Christendom. For many, his talk was like an epiphany. They came to a new realisation that if we are to be effective in mission, we must pool our resources and work not only more efficiently, but also differently."

Helen says that recently a thank-you evening was held for the original vision establishment team, and one of the team spoke of how Graham's summit address helped her to understand the changes that had occurred in the Church during her lifetime.

A ministry team is forming, Helen says, with each member of the team bringing the strengths required. Recent appointments to Trinity and St Paul's are the Revs Chris and Mary-Jane Konings. In Chalmers, the Rev Evan Stenlake from the Uniting Church has been appointed as a short-term transitional minister.

Now that the parishes have made a commitment, Helen says, they have to "find ways to make it happen".

"The next thing is for the combined sessions or boards of managers to meet from 26 May onwards, over two or three months, whilst they work through the governance structure." These combined sessions' meetings were voted on at the



Four ministers from the leadership team that organised the Timaru churches' summit. Left to right: the Revs Chris Konings, Helen Martin, Mary-Jane Konings, and Evan Stenlake

summit day. Helen says that the vote on this motion was 63 percent, not the 66 percent required, so one parish did not give its mandate.

Helen is confident the ministry team is listening to any concerns that have emerged from the Timaru summit day. "The ministry team are very aware of the people who voted against becoming one parish with four congregations, and are working hard at pastoral care of these people, who must not be left out of the mix at this stage. We believe that by listening to their ongoing concerns, we can make the final outcome all the better."

By Angela Singer [Spanz](#)



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LETTERS

ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Editor,

In the recent *Spanz* article "Does giving slump in a recession?" the discussion on overheads taken from donations for overseas aid and development misses a few important aspects that I would like to point out. TEAR Fund's projected overhead for all costs this year is within 19-21 percent. However, that misses the point that much of that overhead is directly benefiting the poor through in-field project appraisal, ongoing monitoring and final evaluation, development project planning, the management of proposals and the writing, winning and administration of technical grants, the building of local and international funding coalitions, and advocating on their behalf for justice. These efforts all profoundly impact the poor and make their lives better, yet they seldom reflect on the balance sheet.

An overhead is not necessarily taking something out of or away from the poor.

Put it another way; I could fly to Bangladesh and hand out rupee notes on a street corner and claim a 1 percent overhead. Would that low overhead be deemed good stewardship? By the way, there is no such thing as 0 percent overheads. Show me the accounts; someone, somewhere picks up the tab.

Since the 1980s there has been a competition - dreamed up by marketing departments I would suggest - between charitable bodies to boast the lowest overheads. TEAR Fund does not join in that game. For us, what is important is the impact of the dollars our donors entrust us with to change the lives of the poor and their communities. We know the results and are proud of the long-term results on the ground.

Keep up the good work *Spanz*!

Stephen Tollestrup
Executive Director, TEAR Fund

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Mega-presbyteries make progress

Presbyteries around the country have been meeting to discuss mergers, with significant progress made in several regions.

The meetings are because General Assembly 2008 decided to reshape radically the presbytery system to focus on resourcing members rather than governance.

The Very Rev Garry Marquand, part of the Presbyteries Task Group, says the central North Island has made fast progress, partly because Bay of Plenty and Waikato had already decided to combine before GA08. South Auckland has joined in the discussion, though is yet to make a final decision.

Garry, also part of the planning team for the new, merged presbytery, says they're keen for it to have a markedly different culture and purpose.

The super-presbytery will have only two meetings a year, which will focus on mission resourcing and building relationships. Instead of taking up most of the meeting time, all governance work will be done by a business committee.

Garry describes resourcing groups as being "at the heart of the presbytery". These groups are about inspiring and equipping

people for mission, as well as providing collegial support.

The first official meeting of the new presbytery will be held this September, over a weekend so that working people can attend, and will feature a seminar by Moderator the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding

Garry says the new Central North Island presbytery will have some freedom to form itself, rather than everything having been detailed in advance by its predecessors.

Key things that will be in place include a moderatorial team (rather than just one person in the role); business committee; administrator (who will perform an expended presbytery clerk role); and a treasurer.

The presbytery's business committee is likely to meet five times a year, with electronic communication in the interim. A culture of short-term task groups is planned, so that they are set up to solve and address a problem, then finish.

All the details don't need to be finalised, Garry says. "We're a rules and regulations Church and some people struggle with that. But it's very important for us to stay flexible and free because the context around the country is so varied."

Other questions fielded by the task group have related to how tasks will be done at a national level, Garry says. "We can only partly respond to that, as the details are being finalised by other groups."

People in the rural sector have expressed some concerns about the new model, he says, such as whether they will be marginalised if meetings are held in cities. "Our response is that resourcing groups provide better opportunities than have existed in the past". For example, a rural resourcing group could link different geographical areas with common concerns and contexts.

The reformation of presbyteries has thrown up some queries from Uniting congregations, particularly in terms of the role of UDCs, Garry says. However, some UDCs are expressing interest in the process, such as Wairarapa, which is considering what it has in common with Manawatu Wanganui.

There's no deadline for the new presbyteries' formation, Garry says.

Another area making progress is Southland and Otago. The Rev Karl Lamb of Te Anau's Lakeside Church is part the task group formed by Southland presbytery to tackle the merger.

Karl says all the presbyteries in the Synod of Otago and Southland area, which is south of the Waitaki River, have already met once, with another meeting planned for April.

Karl says, given that GA08 had made its decision, people were supportive and keen to make the best of the situation. The region has tentatively decided to combine all presbyteries in the Synod of Otago and Southland area. "There still the nuts and bolts to sort out."

Southland presbytery had already reorganised its operations along the lines proposed by the Presbyteries review, with separate governance and resourcing groups.

Karl says it's hoped the new presbytery will be operational in time to be confirmed by General Assembly next year.

By Amanda Wells **Spanz**

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Second visit offers glimpse of real Myanmar

Visiting Myanmar for the second time meant seeing beyond the superficial and gaining a deeper understanding of the constraints its Christians face, according to the Rev Andrew Norton.

Andrew, who is senior minister of St Columba @ Botany in Auckland, spent 12 days in Myanmar in February, accompanied by his daughter Angela, Carol Connor, who is an elder at St Columba, and the Rev Phil King, minister of St Margaret's Bishopdale and moderator of Christchurch Presbytery.

Building our Church's ongoing partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, which is being facilitated by the Global Mission Office, was a key goal of the trip, as was providing some practical help in the form of money and laptops.

While travelling as a "pure tourist" in Myanmar presents no problems, Andrew says, difficulties arise as you seek to engage with the locals.

It's important to show utmost respect for your hosts and do exactly what they tell you, he says. "You have to be very careful that you're not placing them in a compromising position."

While the group visited the capital Yangon (called Rangoon by British colonisers) and Mandalay, they spent most of their time in Kalaymyo (or Kalemio), where the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar is based. This small town is in the Chin hills, not far from the Indian border.

"When we arrived, we were told that we had complete freedom within the town but 'you're not allowed to go outside the town'."

As was the case during Andrew's first visit, a government-appointed chaperon was physically present most of the time, and each day produced a report on their activities.

The main difference on this trip was the chance to build greater trust, Andrew says, as well as being able to better understand the conditions under which people live.

"Now I know more about the actual costs to our hosts."



The Rev Andrew Norton participates in a discussion in Myanmar

Because Myanmar culture is based on hospitality, "they are going to feed you whether they can afford it or not". Offers to pay for meals were rejected, to the discomfort of the visitors. "Putting on a feast for visitors is a cultural imperative."

Paying for official permissions was also expensive. "There were a whole lot of times when the authorities collected money from [our hosts] for having us there," Andrew says.

One night, there was a surprise spot check. "The locals were saying 'this is no problem, everything's fine' but it cost 20,000 kyat – which is a month's wages."

When the group was invited into a church member's home for a meal, the host had to pay for permission for an extra two hours of electricity.

Phil describes this dinner as an interesting cultural experience; eating with their right hands rather than using cutlery. While their hosts served meat at the meal, this was in honour of the occasion and rarely forms part of their normal diet. "We felt worried about how much it cost them."

Carol says one of the lunches they attended had avocados and eggs; again foods that are far from everyday for the Myanmar. Their host would not start till they had all finished eating; a humbling and almost unsettling experience, she says.

The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar is very keen for Andrew to bring more people over and develop the partnership. "This is what they want. Despite the cost"

Andrew says for future visits, he will adopt a koha approach to cover visitors' expenses and ensure that locals are not left out of pocket.

The visitors were very aware of Myanmar's political situation.

"It's illegal for foreigners to engage in political conversations," Andrew says, and they were careful not to put their hosts in danger.

"You ask them about life, and you find that they look over their shoulder."

Phil says: "We didn't feel that shadow of sinister authority but it was obviously there."

They drove from Kalaymyo to Mandalay; a 320 km trip that took 13 hours. The roads were very rough, Carol says, and they were unexpectedly detained at a second military checkpoint. They had to wait in a village where no one spoke English. "It was quite scary when we realised [the checkpoint officer] wouldn't let us go on." But after an hour, they were allowed to continue their journey. Later on, when everyone except Carol was asleep, the driver started to drift off. "For me, it was a lesson in trusting God," she says.

Andrew says Myanmar has got under his skin.

"Myanmar has a residual impact on your life. You just can't go and come back like you've been to Europe. You can't be unmoved or untouched.

"You have to undergo a major critique of all your values and your value judgements."

It was hard to see the level of disease and illness among children, Carol says, just because families could not afford the US\$10 a year for five years that vaccinations cost.

She wanted to respond by giving money, but was also aware of the tension between giving hand-outs and encouraging self-sufficient development.

"The money that we can provide is a drop in the bucket compared to funds from donors like the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Council for World Mission," Phil says.

"What we have to offer is encouragement and that the world hasn't forgotten them."

He says he was struck by Myanmar's thriving street life. "Everybody is trying to sell something. But there always seem to be far more sellers than buyers."

Most people don't have a bank account but just keep any money they have at home.

The Church's synods are ethnically based, and with noticeable material inequality between the groups. "One of the synods we spent time with was much poorer than the dominant ethnic group. They didn't even have telephones in their headquarters, or plumbing. They felt inferior."

Like the society, Church is strongly patriarchal. Men and women eat at separate tables, and enter church through different entrances to separate seating areas.

Angela and Carol were "treated like the men" during the visit, eating at the same table and sitting in the men's area of the church.

Sometimes when Carol was introduced as an elder at St Columba, there was "an audible gasp", she says,

Carol and Angela met with about 10 women from the Zo synod for a morning of discussion. The women talked about "the old way" of life, which generally prevails, where women stay in the home and are not allowed to work. The men are responsible for putting food on the table, with one man feeding 12 members of his extended family, who were dependent solely on him. Carol says they didn't see any beggars in Kalaymo, unlike Rangoon and Mandalay, because people in the Christian-majority area would not let their extended family resort to living in the street.

Some microfinance projects are changing the patriarchal culture, with women able to do some sewing and tailoring to help support their family.

"They really want their children to be educated, although many of them are illiterate themselves," Carol says.

The women were keen to talk about how they could improve their lives, though the Kiwi visitors found it difficult to know what to say, given the huge cultural, political and economic differences.

"They're living in a way that's very foreign to women in New Zealand.

"We talked about education, and how if children know from when they are young that they will go to university, they grow up with that expectation."

One challenge university graduates face is finding employment in their field. For example, someone who trained as a zoologist manages a medical clinic.

Some of the men they met were keen to see women's lot improved, Carol says, saying they want them to "step up".

Carol says she is keen to get some educational resources to the women she met.

"I want our church to hear more and see what is happening over there, and to be encouraged to be involved."

Andrew plans to take another team over there later this year or early next year.

"The people of that country have no voice. Who speaks for those who have no voice?"

By Amanda Wells Spanz

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Tracing a document's journey from Scotland to Lawrence

The Presbyterian Church's Archives hold several unusual and unexpected documents that originated in Scotland. Dating from the 17th century, with a facsimile copy of the National Covenant of Scotland (1638), through to the end of the 19th century and the Illuminated Address from the General Assembly of the United Free Church (1898), they reflect the strong ties between an evolving New Zealand Presbyterian Church and its Scottish Presbyterian heritage.

The Royal Declaration of Appointment (pictured on the right) is one such document. Attached with the personal Seal of Queen Victoria, it gives approval for the appointment and ordination of William Gilchrist as minister to Dalmellington Parish, Ayreshire in 1844.

The parchment Declaration was prepared in Edinburgh on 7 June 1844, by Aeneas MacBean, Writer to the Signet, a person authorised to supervise the use of the private seal of the Kings and Queens of Scotland. The Declaration was gazetted at Whitehall on 12 June 1844 and finally sealed on 20 June 1844 under the signature of John Dean.

A one pound fifteen shillings tax duty stamp is attached on the top left hand corner. To discourage its reuse, a tin alloy tab is placed in the centre and behind it on the back of the document is the Royal Cypher Seal, 2 cm square, which has on it the initials of Queen Victoria and a crown, also intended to prevent illegal reuse. The Tax Stamp is dated 16 January 1844.

Queen Victoria's personal seal, 10 cm in diameter, shows the Coat of Arms of Scotland. The seal has been placed in a tin to protect it and is attached to the Declaration with a strip of parchment.

The church of Dalmellington became a collegiate church to the chapel-royal of Stirling Castle in the 16th century and therefore the patronage belonged to the Crown. Although its relationship with the chapel-royal diminished over the centuries, the Crown continued its right to appoint a resident minister. The means of appointing ministers in the Church of Scotland under patronage was complex and fractious, eventually leading to the Disruption in 1843 and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. William Gilchrist's appointment at Dalmellington coincided with this Presbyterian schism. He ministered there for 12 years and died in office in 1856.

In identifying the provenance of this document, a tale emerges that reveals strong Presbyterian roots, Catherine Gilchrist, a niece of William Gilchrist who had lived with him at Dalmellington, arrived in New Zealand in the mid-1860s. She married Archibald McKinlay in August 1868. Archibald, who arrived in Lawrence in 1861, gave his support to the building of the first small church house in 1864.

The Lawrence Session was authorised by the Clutha Presbytery on 22 April 1867 and the formal Communion Roll established from December 1867. Catherine and Archibald McKinlay were added to the Roll in February 1869. They had four sons and three daughters. Archibald died in 1910 and Catherine in 1932.

Delving into the Lawrence parish records reveals the involvement of a committed Presbyterian family who participated at all levels



of congregational life: as office-bearers, Sunday School teachers and mission supporters over several generations. In memory of their parents, the McKinlay family donated a new organ to the Church in early 1933. Sometime later they offered their family home, "the Sycamores", to the board of managers at a generous price to become the manse.

Two generations later, two grandchildren have become Presbyterian ministers, another served a term as a medical missionary and others continue a deep involvement in Church life.

Through these links it is confirmed that the "Royal Declaration" brought to New Zealand by Catherine was donated to the Presbyterian Church in the mid-1960s by Jim McKinlay. The story behind this valuable and significant treasure is now able to be told. **By Yvonne Wilkie** Spanz

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From subsistence to computers

Jakarin Chaowattananon was one of the first live-in students in the Pakpingjai Home Development Project in Thailand's poor rural north. Typical of students assisted by Pakpingjai, Jakarin is from an isolated hilltribe village, with no access to secondary education beyond Year 9. The subsistence-farming villagers' children remained trapped in poverty.

Pakpingjai assists over 200 children and youth from poor Thai and isolated hilltribe families with school uniforms and supplies. Attending the local primary and secondary schools, those living nearby remain at home. Those from farther away, first only boys but now also girls, live in Pakpingjai.

From four students in 1999, Pakpingjai (the Thai word means "home for the heart") now accommodates 70 young people, aged between five and 18. It's a safe and nurturing community where they develop social skills and lasting friendships.

For some, orphaned by AIDS or removed from abusive families, Pakpingjai is the only home they know. They all learn self-sufficiency and agricultural skills, their formal education is supplemented with other classes, they receive Christian education, some learn music through the band and singing, and, for all, games and sports keep them active.

Without Pakpingjai, many would not begin, let alone complete, secondary schooling and certainly not higher education. Better-educated young people obtaining higher-paying jobs can support parents and younger siblings.

Easing poor families' financial burdens enables their greater self-sufficiency. And, importantly, it helps stem the flow of young women into the Bangkok sex industry in order to support their families.

In 1999, Jakarin was in Year 10. The first Pakpingjai student to reach Year 13 and qualify for university, St Luke's covered his fees and accommodation for a four-year computing for business degree. He now financially assists his family, who live in a

village that still lacks running water and mains electricity.

St Luke's became involved at the project's beginning in 1998 through my connection with the founder, Samarn Marksuk, at a 1996 Christian Conference of Asia gathering. St Luke's gives support from our annual outreach budget, youth group fundraising, and gifts some of my time.

St Luke's youth fundraising bought and fenced land for rice fields, vegetable gardens, a fish farm, banana plantation and "the SLY Sty" – pig pens where piglets are regularly born and sold cheaply to families, encouraging self-sufficiency. Currently, St Luke's Youth pays three university students' fees.

Three groups from St Luke's have visited Pakpingjai since 2004. In 2006 we cunningly took the Rev Stan Stewart from St Heliers. He was hooked!

St Heliers are now also keen Pakpingjai supporters, raising funds to build and equip a hostel for girls, complete with new kitchen and dining area for all the students. They have committed to ongoing support of the hostel girls.

Like St Lukes, two St Heliers groups have visited Pakpingjai. Games with and working alongside PPJ youth in the vegetable and rice fields, sharing with them in worship, and participation in high school English classes, gives privileged Kiwis a taste of another way of life.

During St Luke's visits, our youth each spend a night with a Thai family. One comment sums it up – "I didn't know that people could have so little, and be so happy!"

Pakpingjai is a Christian project. I baptised by immersion Jakarin, and 16 other students, just before his 2006 graduation, and five more this past January. St Heliers' the Rev Pauline Stewart has also baptised students.

I think of Jakarin's journey from August 1999. His father was the village headman, whose role included communing with the spirits in a clearing in the jungle. In 1999 I tried, but wasn't allowed, to go into that clearing. In 2006, Jakarin himself took us there. It could have been any jungle clearing.

From spirits to the Spirit; from subsistence farming to computers in business – it is a privilege to be part of such journeys.

St Luke's and St Heliers invite other churches to share the privilege and support



David Clark (left) and Samarn Marksuk (right) with Jakarin Chaowattananon before his graduation

Pakpingjai through the Global Mission Office. But only for the long haul. There is much need, and many opportunities to make a difference through ongoing commitment – this is our 11th year, and St Heliers' fourth.

Why not join us in developing the work of this "home for the heart".

** Anybody who would like to know more or join the programme can contact the GMO*

By the Rev David Clark Spanz

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Need more info? Contact Right Rev Dr Graham Redding (gredding@knoxcollege.ac.nz) or the Global Mission Office (globalmanager@xtra.co.nz)



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Think small!

A message of hope for our survival

"We need a different kind of world," argues Sarath Fernando. "We are in a very serious crisis. It is more relevant now to talk of survival, not sustainability."

Sarath, a director of CWS partner Monlar, was visiting from Sri Lanka with a strong message for New Zealanders. "We need to heal the earth. We need to take less from the land. We need small farms. We need to plant more trees." His simple and persuasive arguments are based on more than three decades working with small farmers and poor rural communities in Sri Lanka.

"We have overexploited our resources and overexploited nature," warns Sarath. The global financial, climate and food crises all demonstrate the failings of the current approach. "We have to do things differently to survive." Acknowledging huge challenges, he offers a straightforward solution and a message of hope - small agriculture.

Sarath argues big agriculture has failed to deliver adequate food security, nutrition, environmental protection and income for the world's poor people. In the case of Sri Lanka, 31 years of World Bank-led policies for growth – including privatisation of community services, export-orientated economy, and tax freedoms for investors - have achieved little for the majority of the people. The World Bank has admitted economic growth has not eliminated poverty and that social inequalities have in fact increased. Poverty is still widespread, with 22.7 percent of the population living below the official poverty line and 30 percent of all children under five experiencing malnutrition.

The World Bank has called for increased growth to counter this. Sarath argues that "inequality is in fact a creation of the process of growth." For accumulation, you extract from the bottom, with the rewards going to a few. The rich have got richer while the poor have struggled to feed their families, educate their children, access healthcare, and are now fighting the privatisation of



Sarath Fernando

water, which would leave many unable to afford this necessity of life.

"Sri Lanka was managing things better when there was less growth," believes Sarath. Now the country can no longer feed itself. For example, Sri Lanka relies on imported milk powder for 85 percent of its milk consumption. Export-led economic policies have pushed the price of local production up, encouraging cheaper imports and pushing people out of horticulture. Import prices then rise, making it more difficult for people to afford their food and no longer able to provide their own.

Environmental degradation and climate change are another challenge. The obsession with growth and big agriculture is destroying nature's capacity to provide what humans need. The move to large tea plantations has deforested Sri Lanka. This

adversely affects water storage, soil quality and erodes the land. The widespread use of chemicals has reduced soil fertility and is killing the local ecology the people rely on.

Small farmers are already the victims of climate changes. Rain is no longer reliable, explains Sarath, making life more difficult for people who depend on generations-old knowledge of when to plant and harvest. He accepts that Monlar can't change the way other countries affect the climate, so they are focusing on introducing farming methods that aid adaption to the changing circumstances. One example is techniques that make the soil more capable of retaining water.

Changes to agricultural practices are the key to Sarath's approach and are a main part of the Monlar programme funded by CWS. They provide training and support for regenerative agricultural practices in ways that "do not destroy the environment and reduce the need to make people redundant".

Small diversified farms, organic growing, and more trees are core to working in harmony with nature. Trees assist with soil fertility, soil protection, water reserves, mulching and more. Diversity means that if some crops are killed by drought, others will survive. Low-cost practices such as natural fertilisers and pesticides and traditional soil conservation, help build self-sufficiency and decrease rural poverty.

Farmers should grow what they need, not what the market - or the government - tells them to grow. As financial and food crises take hold everywhere, poor people in many countries will have to adopt low-cost farming to sustain themselves, Sarath says.

CWS has several documentaries available on these issues. Water, who owns it? features Sarath and water rights in Sri Lanka. The Global Banquet examines food production and agricultural systems. Contact CWS 0800 74 73 72 for more information or check out www.cws.org.nz/resources



Presbyterian Support

PRESBYTERIAN SUPPORT SOUTHLAND

Service Development in Rural Communities

As part of our mission "To Provide Health and Welfare Services to the People of Southland and the Wakatipu Basin" Presbyterian Support Southland is constantly adapting our range of services to help meet the changing needs of our community.

For some time we have been hearing anecdotal reports of various service gaps in the Western Southland area. While we have some individual clients in the area and we have made "one off" deliveries of our parenting programme we do not have a regular presence in Western Southland. This has made it difficult for us to gauge the extent of the problem or indeed if there is a problem.

After some initial discussions with local service providers and individuals we decided that a more in dept investigation was needed. We found that Venture Southland already had some research underway to update statistical/demographic data across Southland to assist future planning and lobbying. This information will reinforce our research and help with forecasting. Venture Southland along with the Ministry of Social Development, were happy to support us in a successful application to the new Lotteries Community Sector Research Fund to fund a project to look at social service delivery in the area.

We have been granted \$72,000 to undertake research in the area from Halfmoon Bay through Riverton up to Lumsden and across to Te Anau.

The purpose of the research is to:

- » Investigate particular issues in the delivery of social services in rural Southland.
- » Focus in particular on the needs, current service delivery and gaps in services to older people and families with young children (up to 13 years).
- » Carry out an inventory of the services/resources currently targeted to these groups.
- » Assess the impact of Government policy/programmes on the target groups, in terms of their socio-economic status, geographic isolation and any relative disadvantage they face having their needs met.
- » Identify organisational/capacity barriers impacting on availability/access to services.
- » Identify contracted/non-contracted funding utilised to deliver services.
- » Recommend appropriate responses to deliver services to the rural population of Southland. These may include service proposals from Presbyterian Support Southland alone, collaborative ventures or service delivery by other agencies and organisations.

We have started the preliminary work on the project and will be working with Taylor Baines & Associates, who have expertise in social research assessment, policy development and management. They also have experience working with communities, evaluating services and strategic planning.

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Caring for Creation is the fifth in a series of group study booklets produced by the Presbyterian Church to encourage congregations to reflect about contemporary issues that are impacting our communities. Copies of the previous four study guides, *House to Home*, *Caring for our Children*, *Connecting with Young People* and *Bring on the Baby Boomers* are also still available. Email info@presbyterian.org.nz or phone Sandra on (04) 801-6000 and us know how many free copies you would like.

All five studies can be downloaded from the Presbyterian Church website
Home>>Social Justice and Advocacy>>Resources>>Studies