

# Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

WINTER 2016, ISSUE 66



Neighbour  
outreach

[www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz)

**COMMENT:** DR JO CRIBB

# Inspiring Women

**We can be proud of New Zealand's history as the first country to give women the vote and our legislation that ensures we are free of gender discrimination.**

Women are recognised as senior leaders in political life, in business and in the community. Girls are encouraged to succeed in sectors that were once closed to their mothers, aunts and grandmothers. Women are now achieving tertiary qualifications at a greater rate than men.

But have we got everything sorted?

My job, as the chief executive of the Ministry for Women, is to celebrate what we have achieved and continue to make improvements for New Zealand women and girls.

There are many areas where women are still not experiencing the same outcomes as men. For example, the gender pay gap is almost 12 percent between men and women, and the gap is even greater between women of different ethnicities and ages.

Men are still selected for leadership positions in our public institutions and private sector companies more often than women.

We still have social norms that guide career choices based on gender, rather than skills and interest. We also know that one in four women experience violence from their partner in their lifetime.

How can this be so?

I am pleased to say these things can change and that the Ministry is leading the change.

I lead a team of dedicated men and women who work with organisations and individuals to help them understand the impact of their attitudes and actions so we can further improve the lives of New Zealand women.

We are working with organisations to broaden women's career choices. As our economy changes, much of the growth will be in technology and innovation-related jobs. These are not roles that girls and women have traditionally considered, but that's changing. The number of women in physical, mathematical and engineering science professionals groups has nearly doubled in over the past two decades; rising from nine percent in 1991 to 21 percent in 2013.

In Canterbury, we worked with local partners to increase the number of women in trades and construction. Our efforts contributed to the rebuild and got women into jobs with great prospects and high growth.

Together we doubled the number of women in construction, from 4,100 in December 2013 to 8,300 in December 2015.

We are now using the lessons from Canterbury to increase the number of women in trades training and employment in Northland and South Auckland.



Dr Jo Cribb, chief executive of the Ministry for Women.

Having more women in these industries will help break down occupational groupings which may impact pay and career progression.

We work across government, particularly with violence against women, to ensure that the policies, legislation and practices are in place to make a difference for women.

We also work with a range of stakeholders, including community organisations, to influence the decisions that women, men and their families make throughout their lives.

As a country we can be proud of our history and our women leaders. Our inspiring women profiles on [www.women.govt.nz](http://www.women.govt.nz) show women from all walks of life who have amazing stories to tell. I encourage you to read these stories and inspire the next generation of women leaders in our homes, parishes, workplaces and communities.

*– Dr Jo Cribb is chief executive of the Ministry for Women and a member of St John's in the City Presbyterian, Wellington. She is an experienced senior leader in the public sector and also holds a number of governance roles in the non-profit sector.*



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## Who we are

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## MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

The Right Rev Andrew Norton contributes a regular column to *Spanz*



## The end of a franchised God

**I remember back to the days when I went to McDonalds and asked for a Big Mac without onions. It couldn't be done! Now, the rules have changed; you can design your own burger.**

In 2017 we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It's time we rediscovered what we gained and what, I fear, we have lost.

Have we become what we protested against - a closed franchise system with exclusive rights on God and the interpretation of the Scriptures?

On 31 October 1517 Luther defiantly nailed a copy of his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church.

Luther was asking for a public debate on abuse of power by the Church around the forgiveness of sin and subsequent profiteering.

The Reformation was sparked by questioning the abusive authority of the Church and developed three radical ideas:

- » What if the general public could read Scripture for themselves and make up their own minds?
- » What if people could have direct access (forgiveness) to God without having to pay for it?
- » What if everybody was recognised as a priest/minister exercising the ministry of the whole people of God?

Following the Reformation, new franchise agents in the form of denominations emerged to offer a range of choices as to how God was understood and experienced. With the decline on denominations in the 20th century, each denomination markets their own corner of the truth as if it were the truth.

Today, people have put away their bibles and listen to the preacher/priest. Truth is once again mediated.

Today, the auditorium and stage have created a new priesthood of entertainers to mediate the God experience.

Today, the economic model of local churches serves the buildings and paid professionals. The priesthood of all believers is a thing of the past.

In the meantime there is a global hunger and thirst for spiritual reality; an unmediated experience of God. The Church holds prime corner real-estate, but people no longer find this as their source of spiritual nourishment. The franchised God is not working for them.

I believe we are living in a time of a new reformation.

The prime agency of this reformation is none other than the spirit of God and God's spirit can't be franchised.

I believe three radical ideas could be part of this new reformation.

### From the "in church" to the market place

This will be a mass movement into the streets, homes and workplaces of people. If God does not make sense in these places, then God makes no sense inside the church. This is where the Scripture needs to be read again and rediscovered; the book of the common people.

### From the sanctuary to the world

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it," (Psalm 24). What if everything was sacred and the divine presence of God was experienced with and in the world? Surely this is the good news of the incarnation in Jesus Christ? This would be both messy and beautiful and just maybe we would treat people and our environment differently if we lived this.

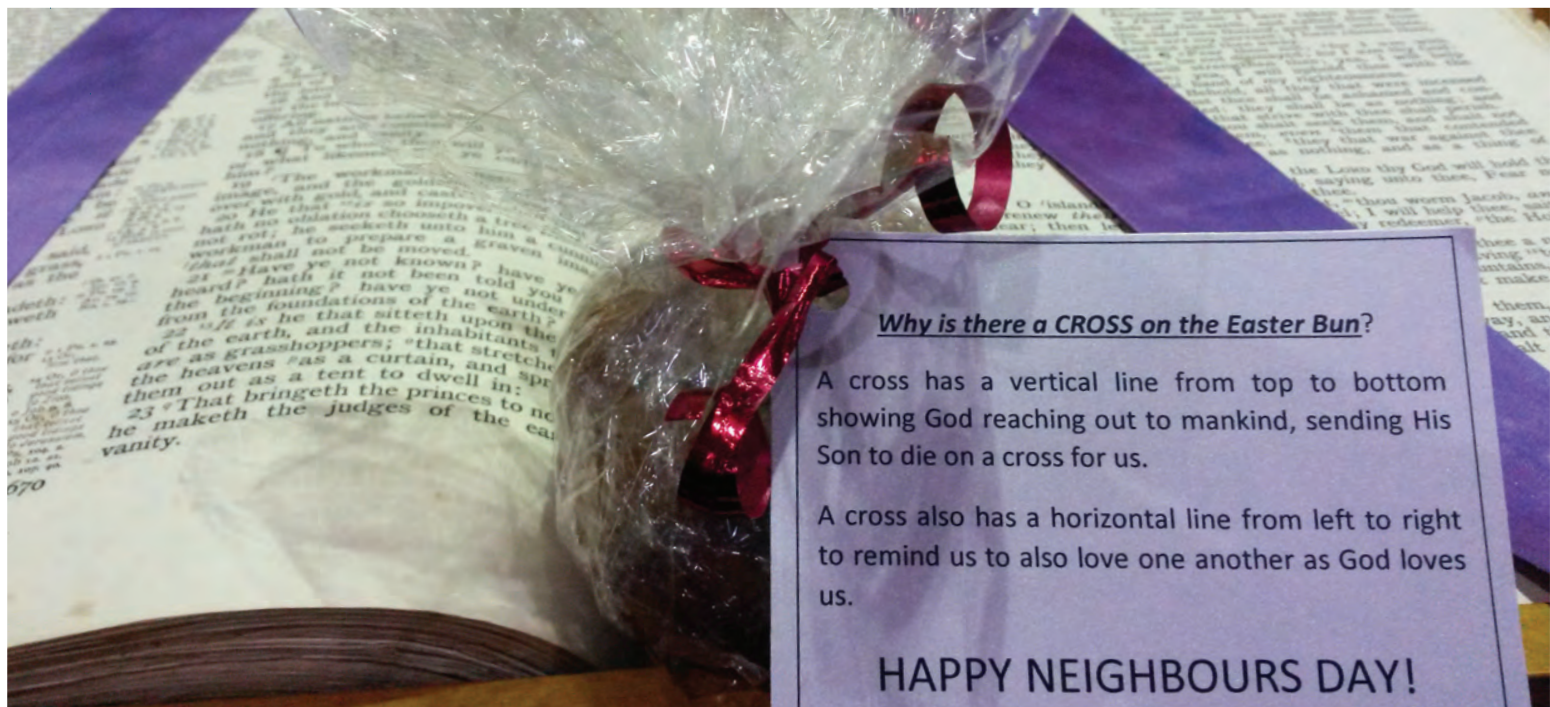
### From the audience to community

At the core of the nature of God, is community. There can be no God life without community. This is a radical community, crossing all cultural boundaries and freely giving the graces (gifts) of God to all people. To truly become a community of the Spirit we will need to let go of our carefully guarded religious differences and definitions of who is "in" and who is "out".

Luther, posting his theses on the door of the church was saying this matter was too important to be debated inside the church. You cannot trust those who made the system to reform it.

Re-formed and re-forming sounds like something I think God could be into, don't you?

— Andrew Norton



St Andrew's Te Puke minister, Rev Mario Weyers challenged his congregation to give hot cross buns to neighbours that they didn't already know.

# NEIGHBOURS DAY OPENS DOORS INTO COMMUNITIES

**As the theme tune for a famous Australian soap opera put it, "Neighbours, everybody needs good neighbours".**

But in a society where we are increasingly disconnected from our neighbours, when many of us don't even know the names of those who live next door, isn't it time we heeded the call to be better neighbours?

That's the ethos behind New Zealand's biggest celebration of neighbourliness, Neighbours Day.

An initiative that's taken off across the world over the last decade, Neighbours

Day was introduced to New Zealand via Lifewise and the Takapuna Methodist Church in Auckland in 2009. Two years later, events were being run nationwide on the last weekend of March.

The aim is to encourage neighbours to get to know each other through local events.

Anne Overton, who is PresCare project manager as well as Presbyterian Support Northern's community advocate, is a passionate supporter of Neighbours Day.

"It's an intentional way for people to meet those in their neighbourhood and

turn strangers into friends," says Anne. "It's also a good way to create a safe place for children."

Anne believes that these days, it's easy to lose a sense of community. "We've built high fences around our properties and often have neighbours who don't look like us or talk like us. It might seem too hard to get to know them. But Neighbours Day is a way to get a sense of those who live around us, to find out who might be lonely or who might need a little more love and support right now."

From a Church perspective, Neighbours Day is a "way of reaching out to the community in a low-key, intentional way," says Anne. "Not only is it a way of finding out what's going on in your neighbourhood, it's also a good way of creating a safer environment."

This year Neighbours Day was held on March 19 and 20 which coincided with Palm Sunday; Easter Friday was just four days later.

For the third year running, PresCare, the joint Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Support initiative, got behind Neighbours Day by inviting parishes to show good old-fashioned Christian hospitality to their neighbours.

"It made sense to combine the Easter and Neighbours Day initiatives so we suggested that parishes might like





Hot cross buns with an Easter message were packaged and given to locals as part of Mangapapa Union's Neighbours Day outreach.

to deliver a short message about the meaning of the Easter bun when they distributed them. PresCare provided downloadable resources to be able to do this," says Anne.

A number of \$50 grants were available for parishes to buy or bake hot cross buns for neighbours. Anne says PresCare was overwhelmed with the number of parishes interested in this grant and because of budgetary constraints, had to close it off at 11 churches.

However, that didn't stop many parishes organising and funding their own Neighbours Day initiatives, including St Peter's Church in Ellerslie, who held a barbeque and invited neighbours.

Below is a round-up of some of the outreach parishes took part in for Neighbours Day 2016. Anne says she was thrilled with the response and predicts it will get bigger and better each year. But she's also at pains to point out that being a good neighbour shouldn't just be restricted to one day.

"It's about asking, what can I do in my neighbourhood? Can I bring morning or afternoon tea to someone? Can I share produce from my garden with my neighbours? It's really just an intentional way of sharing a kindness with someone who might need it."

### St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Te Puke

"Our theme this term is how a small church like ours (50-70 active members) can still make a difference in our community," says the Rev Mario Weyers. "So this project was perfect!"

Mario bought 48 hot cross buns and added a card explaining the reason behind the cross on the bun. At the end of the service, he challenged his congregation to give a bun to a neighbour they didn't know. "All the buns were taken in the blink of an eye," says Mario.

"One church member asked me for more cards because she was going to buy packets of buns, put cards on them and give them to houses occupied by people in New Zealand for the kiwifruit season."

### Highgate Presbyterian Church, Dunedin

The emphasis for Highgate this Neighbours Day was on "sharing time together with our community and getting to know our neighbours," reports Jess Ross.

It took the form of a successful sports day on the Maori Hill School sports grounds. As well as sack and egg-and-spoon races there was also a bouncy castle, a balloon maker and various food stalls, including sausage sizzles, candy floss and lots of delicious home baking.

"We were lucky to have brilliant weather and around 50-70 people came together to enjoy themselves," says Jess. "We also had lots of passersby call in."

Jess says they hope to repeat the initiative to continue promoting fellowship in their community.

### St Andrew's Church Geraldine

It wasn't just hot cross buns on offer at St Andrew's Church in Geraldine – around 120 barbeque sausages were also on the menu.

Denise Sewell, head of community outreach, says they set up the sausage sizzle in front of the church hall.

"Some of our business neighbours called in as well as people passing by on the street," says Denise. "Our community outreach team felt that it was important to try and connect and build relationships with our neighbours and locals in our community. We shine a light for the Lord!"

### Island Bay Presbyterian, Wellington

Palm Sunday is often a bit of an extravaganza at Island Bay Presbyterian Church, combining a Boys' Brigade/Girls' Brigade church parade, a petting zoo, and of course the usual Palm Sunday elements, explains Kids Worker, Mel Heaphy.

**NEIGHBOURS DAY 2016**  
19-20 MARCH



## SHARE THE CROSS WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS

TAKE HOT CROSS BUNS TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS AND SHARE THE EASTER STORY!  
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WWW.PRESBYTERIAN.ORG.NZ/FOR-MINISTERS/PRESCARE/NEIGHBOURS-DAY



Youth helped prepare Easter buns for gifting to neighbours at St Andrew's Te Puke.

"This year was no exception and because it was Neighbours Day we invited our church neighbours in for tea after the service," says Mel.

### St Austells Uniting Church, New Lynn

"We had our usual op shop and youth group car wash and sausage sizzle going on during the Saturday morning," says parish secretary Pat Green.

"We set up tables with free coffee and home baking. Lots of passersby dropped in and we made some great contacts with residents new to the area. It was a good time of fellowship and people were very appreciative of what we were doing."

Pat says the whole parish was involved in Neighbours Day because they believe it's important to offer hospitality as the basis of Christianity, "emulating what Jesus did by offering food and drink to those we meet".

Indeed, the day was so successful that they hope to hold another free coffee morning later this year.

### St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ashburton

St Andrew's ministry assistant Dellwyn Moylan says they've celebrated Neighbours Day in a variety of ways over the years, including giving truffles

to neighbours and running a Good Neighbour of the Year competition.

This year they used the \$50 grant to distribute hot cross buns. A local business, Harvey Bakery, also donated buns which were given to schools, playcentres, medical and dental surgeries and law firms.

"I think it's important for the church to get out from within its four walls and immerse ourselves in the community," says Dellwyn. "In doing so we learn of the needs of the community that we can respond to. The more the church lives its faith in real and practical ways, the more that faith is shared."

### Mangapapa Union Church, Gisborne

Mangapapa Union Church leader Stewart Patrick says they also applied for and received the \$50 grant to buy hot cross buns to share with their neighbours.

"But this was really just the beginning. We ended up buying around \$120 worth of buns which were distributed to our Christians Against Poverty debt centre clients and various families in the region, along with Hope for All booklets and Easter Sunday service invitations," says Stewart.

The buns were also distributed as part of the church's Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) taskforce.

"Our RAK team bakes morning tea treats every Friday for around 20 locals who can't get out much or live alone. To coincide with Neighbours Day, these people received their usual visit as well as hot cross buns, Easter eggs and a Hope for All booklet which our team discussed with them," says Stewart.

### Kaikorai Presbyterian Church, Dunedin

Olive Lewis, church manager, says that Kaikorai embrace the concept of Neighbours Day as "another tool to make contact with the community and to offer families the time and space to stop".

This year they invited the community to share in egg-and-spoon races, gumboot throwing and cricket, as well as a sausage sizzle and free hot cross buns.

"We were pleased with the turn-out and hope that this will grow into something that people will embrace as a wonderful means of not only having fun together, but also as a means to engage in meaningful conversation," says Olive.

Sharon Stephenson Spanz



# Church volunteers help new Syrian neighbours

Turn on the news any night of the week and you'll see the tsunami of refugees fleeing from war-torn Syria. Recent reports estimate more than one million Syrian refugees and migrants have now entered Europe, turning it into one of the planet's largest humanitarian crises.



Photo: Red Cross

Assisting refugees with the tasks of everyday life in New Zealand is a big part of the role for Red Cross volunteers including those from our churches.

New Zealand might be a long way from Europe but the Rt Rev Andrew Norton, Presbyterian Church Moderator, has urged churches here to “provide a safe place of hospitality and welcome” for people displaced by war.

“We cannot close our eyes to the great need in countries like Syria,” says Andrew. “As a Church we are called to advocate for those in need.”

As well as calling on the New Zealand government to increase its quota of 750 refugees per year, Andrew also encouraged churches to offer practical support to help Syrian refugees to resettle in New Zealand.

Two of those who heeded Andrew's call were the Rev Sharon Ross Ensor, director of the Presbyterian Church Schools' Resource Office in Wellington, and Clive McGovern from St Margaret's Presbyterian Church in Silverstream, Wellington.

Both Sharon and Clive became refugee support volunteers with New Zealand Red Cross late last year. They underwent a training programme (five Thursday evenings plus a Saturday) that helped prepare them to support the new arrivals. The programme covered topics such as the refugee experience, an overview of the political system in Syria as well as Syrian culture, English language support, pathways to employment, supporting families with school enrolments, medical registration and for government support, as well as how to use public transport, pay bills and set up bank services.

Clive and Sharon got the chance to put their training to use in February when New Zealand's first intake of 82 Syrian refugees arrived in Wellington (from the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre where they'd spent six weeks). Each volunteer commits to work with one family for six months.

For Clive, who retired a year ago, becoming a volunteer is about helping others less fortunate than himself.

“I've got the time and the energy and I'm a do-er – I want to help wherever I can,” he says.

Clive is part of a team of three volunteers who were paired up with a family of four who had spent four years in a Lebanese refugee camp. They were allocated Housing New Zealand accommodation in Lower Hutt (which was set up by local churches and organisations) and, despite the fact that they speak little English, Clive says they manage to communicate.

“It can be quite difficult sometimes but we use Google Translate and somehow work things out.”

So far, Clive has spent several hours a week with the family, accompanying them to Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), the bank, supermarket and local schools where their two children were enrolled. He's been surprised by things such as the family's refusal to set up automatic payments or leave cash in their bank accounts.

“They don't trust the banking system because in Syria the government emptied

their bank accounts. It's those little things we take for granted that are so different for the refugees.”

Being a volunteer is a rewarding experience and Clive says the family is very grateful. “They show their gratitude with food and we spend a lot of time eating! I'm so glad to have met people I would never have otherwise met.”

Sharon, who works for the Church three days a week, says it was a no brainer to become a volunteer.

“These refugees have an immense need. They arrived in Wellington with very little and we have so much. For me, it was about stepping up and supporting those who need it.”

Sharon's team of three was also assigned a family of four – a couple and their two preschoolers. They were settled in Wellington and Sharon says she has supported them with visits to the doctor, WINZ and the supermarket.

“We've also done things like taking them on the bus and showing them how to use a Snapper card. It sounds easy but it can take a lot of time.”

And despite the language barrier, Sharon says she's fond of the family.

“They're really lovely and are so motivated. In the first week they had already started a veggie garden in their backyard. They want to succeed in New Zealand and I'm grateful to have the opportunity to be able to help them.”

Sharon Stephenson Spanz

# Parishes Help Communities



The St Peters House Christians Against Poverty debt management service has helped 27 people become debt free since starting in 2011.  
Pictured: Karen McLeay, CAP Centre Manager.

**While finding the funds to support mission isn't always easy, grants from the Tindall Foundation have powered many big thinking parishes to make a difference in their communities.**

Most grants are less than \$10,000, however in August 2015 St Peter's House – the service arm of St Peters in the City in Tauranga – received a grant of \$14,200 from the Tindall Foundation to support the operation of the debt management service that they provide in partnership with Christians Against Poverty (CAP).

CAP specialist head office staff liaise with clients' creditors and provide advice on routes out of debt, but it is the local centre that is the face of CAP, says Cath Page, manager at St Peter's House.

"Since our service opened in 2011, 27 clients have become debt free. It can take two to four years for someone to become debt free depending on their income, size of debt and family circumstances, so getting there is a long process," she says.

Karen McLeay, CAP centre manager, works three days per week, and typically has around 30 clients on the books at any one time explains Cath.

St Peter's in the City members are an integral part of the outreach and provide ongoing support for clients including regular visits, practical help, prayer and advocating with agencies on clients' behalf.

In many cases, a budget isn't enough. The wrap-around service offered by St Peter's House and St Peters Church help equip people to develop wider skills for life, Cath says.

"Clients are supported as they learn to operate a budget, pay off their debt with their own money and head towards the

ultimate goal of becoming debt free and more financially literate. For some, it is also about teaching fundamental life skills that they may not have seen modelled before."

## Funding manager

Presbyterian Support New Zealand is one of several funding managers that the Tindall Foundation uses to distribute grants to eligible projects like the St Peter's House budgeting service.

Of the \$9-\$12 million that the Tindall Foundation donates to community causes every year, around 50 per cent is allocated to projects that support families and social services.

Taone O'Regan from Presbyterian Support New Zealand who sits on the funding manager selection panel for Tindall Foundation grants, says that deciding which projects should be supported each year is a difficult one.

"Having clear outcomes for the project, working in partnership with other local organisations and knowing who is vulnerable in your community and targeting your services to them, really strengthens a project application," she says.

## Mahu Vision

Better supporting the needs of its culturally diverse community was the driver behind the Mahu Vision Community Trust – service arm of Mahurangi Presbyterian Church – Pasifika Community Support Programme, which received \$10,000 in Tindall Foundation funding in 2015.

Roger Mackay, parish manager and Jonathon Lane, Mahu Vision trustee, say that starting the project was easy enough, but accessing funding on an ongoing

basis to make the programme sustainable is more challenging.

Stephene Manuel and Rosanna Ball who until recently job shared the community worker role for 28 hours per week are the driving force behind the Trust's work with the local Pasifika community.

Following Stephene's recent resignation to spend more time with her family, Rosanna is now the only community worker and her work with migrants from Kiribati, Tonga, Niue and other Pacific nations is varied says Roger.

"She supports people to access welfare grants and services that they are entitled to. She organises, parenting courses, sessions on how to prepare New Zealand foods, literacy classes. Rosanna provides advice, helps people access health and education services and much more.

"The people we support are often used to living a remote village lifestyle, and our work is aimed at helping them to live comfortably in New Zealand, while still retaining links to their own culture," explains Roger.

The Mahu Vision Trust co-ordinated annual Pasifika celebration festival provides an opportunity to celebrate Pacific culture. It has developed into a major community event and is well supported by Pasifika peoples, local officials as well as the Mahurangi community. In 2015, the event attracted more than 500 people.

## Community facilitator

Community empowerment was also behind East Taieri Church's community facilitator role, which received \$10,698 from the Tindall Foundation last year.





Children enjoying the annual Mahu Vision Trust organised festival celebrating Pasifika culture.



More than 500 people from the wider Mahurangi community enjoy the annual festival that celebrates Pasifika culture.

Community facilitator, Joy Davis who is a member of the ministry leadership team at East Taieri, initially started in the role by herself and is now assisted by community support worker Jackie Dickison (who gifts her time to the initiative).

Joy's work started with visits to local organisations to discover more about what they did, which was sometimes met with suspicion she says. This was followed up by a postcard survey to the wider community that asked what people liked about their community and what they found challenging.

The meetings and survey data provided good information about what resources were available within the community and what people felt was important.

One of the first initiatives to get off the ground, which is still running strong, is the Mosgiel Resource Group (45 agency members), whose monthly meeting is attended regularly by more than 20 community agencies like Work and Income New Zealand, Lions, the Police, and others.

Along with other community groups Joy and Jackie responded to the call from local police to help establish an emergency response plan for Mosgiel by researching halls and venues that could be used for welfare purposes in an emergency. Thanks to the efforts of those in this group, which includes East Taieri Church, Mosgiel now has an emergency response plan and a group charged with its implementation in the event of a natural or other disaster.

"This is a classic example of local people using local resources to solve local problems," says Joy.

Business breakfasts at a local cafe, parent support evenings, work with local schools and community lunches are among the many things that Joy and Jackie have organised in the six years since the community facilitator role was established.

In 2015 the leaders and congregations of East Taieri Church sought God's will in the writing of a vision statement for community ministry. The statement, which brought everyone together, talks about "thriving church, thriving community where everyone feels connected, known, loved and valued".

### Youth mentoring

An intentional programme to mentor and develop young people in Rolleston was also successful in gaining Tindall Foundation funding in 2015.

Hope Youth Rolleston has been serving and supporting intermediate and high school young people for more than six years, and the Tindall Foundation grant has helped them to continue this work which involves working in the community and in local schools to empower young people to be the best they can be.

Since 2009, Hope Youth has been present at Rolleston Primary School supporting staff and students in various ways including mentoring, leadership development, running lunchtime and term sports activities and organising events. They also run a fortnightly programme for intermediate and high school age children.

Courtney Forrest, who has lived and worked in Rolleston for the last three and half years, is Hope Church's Rolleston

youth worker and he is passionate about growing and developing the community's young people.

An out-of-school mentoring programme for a small group of at-risk young people is an important part of Courtney's work.

"At the heart of this mentoring service is to show care and support to these young people, and encourage them to make right decisions. We have seen a lot of positive relationships developed through simply walking and supporting them," says Courtney.

Hope Youth is also out in the community helping with local events like skate park competitions, roller discos and other local council run events. They have also been present and serving at the local ANZAC ceremonies.

Courtney says that one of the biggest learnings has been to acknowledge that they can't cater for all the needs of the young people by themselves.

"By working together with other local agencies in the community we can cover a lot more ground work and projects," he says.

For this reason, in the last year or so, the team has taken steps to raise the profile of their work in the community, says Courtney. One area that has worked really well, he says, has been forming a relationship with the local council's youth development officer.

*Funding from the Tindall Foundation has made it a lot easier for parishes with heart and big ideas to make a positive difference in the lives of others. For more information about how to apply for a Tindall Foundation grant, see [www.psnz.org.nz](http://www.psnz.org.nz)*

Jose Reader Spanz





The new Homestead Community Church building in Point Chevalier opened earlier this year. The church endured a long legal battle with Auckland Council.

## Church celebrates success of new Homestead

In February, the Homestead Community Church in Point Chevalier opened the doors of its new building to enthusiastic community response.

Over 100 people turned out to open the new church and community centre, which has long been a landmark in Point Chevalier.

Welcomes were given in Maori, Tongan, Niuean and English. Local Catholic priest Father John Webb gave a blessing and the church's legal team cut the ribbon, in honour of having successfully won a protracted legal battle with Auckland Council over the removal of the old church building.

The community had also kept a close watch on the lengthy process of removal and rebuild that began in mid 2013. Children at the day care centre across the road had made a project with pictures that were displayed at the opening, and neighbours also flocked in to celebrate.

The rebuild has retained the external character of the old one-storey colonial era villa. "So many people said 'Ah, you've brought the old building back', says minister the Rev Sandra Warner. "It has the same fretwork, balustrades and footprint. The only major difference is the old walkway to the auditorium is gone and the two buildings look like one, although they're not."

The concept was to make the new structures functional, practical, simple and adaptable, explains Sandra. A large commercial kitchen is a great asset and,

besides the church itself, there is also a community centre and an op shop. "It's lovely to be using a new purpose-built facility that serves both the church and the community," she says. "The building is a feature in the community and a witness to faith."

The church uses the property exclusively on Sundays but from Monday to Saturday 21 different groups are already paying to hire its spaces for a range of activities from Pilates and chair yoga to knitting and Girl's Brigade.

"The place is humming with life," says Sandra. "There's a shortage of affordable, quality facilities in our area and we're delighted to see the building already being used to its maximum capacity for the good of the community. We had a David and Goliath battle with the council that chewed up money and energy but it's been a great outcome."

Nine out of the sixteen volunteers who work in the op shop are community rather than church members. "We have all sorts of people wanting to volunteer," says Sandra. "Young mums, people on benefits who want to feel connected and useful. We can always find them things to do, from sorting clothes to working on reception. When people serve each other it gives them a sense of self-worth," she adds.

Jeanine is a church volunteer on Mondays and says, "The building is beautiful and the op shop helps people by providing low cost good quality clothing." She works alongside Kathy who volunteers because she wants to contribute to the community. "I enjoy meeting people. The Homestead allows me to do that."

As a result of so many people enjoying the space, the congregation is also growing. Sandra has her office next to the op shop and keeps an open door policy, which encourages conversation and connection with the community.

"I see it as the church and community merging, where faith and friendship meet," she explains. "Fundamentally, it's all about relationship and showing the love of God. It's great to see the congregation growing and we hope we'll still be thriving in this new building in a hundred years."

The parish is very thankful to God for all the help this project received.

"Our legal team worked very hard on our behalf, the local Catholic Church helped out by allowing us to use their hall for just over two years and the Northern Presbytery was very supportive. The Presbyterian and the Christian Churches New Zealand Church Property Trustees were also very understanding and helpful," she adds. "They saw our predicament and allowed us time to sort it out. We kept them up to date and were able to uplift money at the appropriate time."

Sandra has nothing but praise for the builders, who began work last July and handed over the keys in mid-December. "They were professional and kept us informed all the way through. They were absolutely wonderful," she says.

Jade Reidy Spanz



# Choir sings from heart on new CD

**The Festival Singers' new CD of religious music for New Zealand congregations was recorded at Island Bay Presbyterian Church.**

Island Bay minister the Rev Nathan Parry remembers the day he asked the children of the congregation, "Do you know what I do for a living?"

"You sing," one boy said.

"I realised that much of what I do does involve singing," says Nathan.

Shortly afterwards he joined the Festival Singers, and was delighted when Island Bay Presbyterian Church was chosen as the venue for the recording of a new CD of religious songs for New Zealanders titled *People of the Light*.

"I joined the choir to do something fun, to get better at singing myself. I thought it was a cool thing to be involved in putting together a CD of New Zealand-written church songs. I was quite surprised they chose our church to record the CD. Jonathan Berkahn, who wrote nearly all the songs, is very eclectic and creative. He uses a variety of styles and instruments. So it was a lot of fun, and a privilege, both for me and the church, to be involved."

Four members of the Island Bay church are in the Festival Singers, and the church now uses songs from the CD in their services. "We try to use as much New Zealand music as we can, and often use the works of the Rev Malcolm Gordon, who is currently based in Dunedin," says Nathan.

Jonathan Berkahn, director of the Festival Singers, is also director of music at Onslow Anglicans at St Barnabas, Khandallah. His main day job is teaching counterpoint and harmony at the New Zealand School of Music at Victoria University.

"The CD came out late last year, and we have already had a lot of positive feedback – not only from churches but from people who have put it to use for their own particular spiritual purposes,

and sometimes in a very practical way. A friend was packing up and moving during a time of personal crisis. She played the first track, the Advent Song, over and over to get through it," says Jonathan.

He writes his songs for his own faith community. "There is obviously an individual sensibility at work, but I am concentrating on designing songs that speak to and for a community.

"Writing songs for singing in churches is a very interesting discipline because the limitations are so tight. You have about an octave in range, it's got to work in a very large public space and it's got to make people want to sing.

"When I preach from the pulpit I say all sorts of things that come into my head. It doesn't matter if it is nonsense because it is coming out of my mouth. But when I am making people sing the words themselves, the words have to be ones people identify with themselves. It's not about me, it's about them. I find this the single most interesting way of making music that I am engaged in."

Jonathan chose Island Bay Presbyterian Church not only because four choir members are based there, but because of a performance there in 2014.



Festival singers at the November 2015 launch of their "People of the Light" CD of religious songs.

"I liked the way the choir sounded in there. The way in which the space makes you feel in terms of acoustics has a huge effect on the kind of performance a choir gives. When I was drawing up a list of potential venues, I remembered the way the choir sounded at Island Bay.

"And the church had everything we needed: a piano on site, electronic organ to tune up and a drum kit. My only anxiety was traffic noise but we managed that pretty well. Another important factor was that Nathan and the choir members made us very welcome, and there was a feeling of buy-in from the whole church."

Conductor Guy Jansen formed the Festival Singers in 1976, with an emphasis on encouraging younger singers. "It's always been a Christian choir, set up to enable churches to hear and sing music they wouldn't otherwise be able to hear and sing," says Jonathan.

Khandallah Presbyterian Church in Wellington will host a reunion and service for the choir's 40th birthday 15-16 October. Details are on the website: [www.festivalsingers.wordpress.com](http://www.festivalsingers.wordpress.com).

*People of the Light* is available for \$25 through [festivalproductions@gmail.com](mailto:festivalproductions@gmail.com).

Jane Tolerton Spanz

# MUCH TO LEARN FROM SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY



**To trace the role of chaplains in Presbyterian schools, you have to reach all the way back to the early 1900s, when the *Religion in Schools Bill*, aimed at teaching religious education in state schools, was rejected by Parliament. That fueled the establishment of faith-based schools in New Zealand.**

"Between 1914 and 1919, eight Presbyterian schools were established around New Zealand," says the Rev Sharon Ross Ensor, director of the Presbyterian Schools' Resource Office. "Each school had a commitment to a holistic education within a Christian ethos and Reformed/Presbyterian tradition. This included the teaching of Christian/religious education and regular services of worship."

And so was born the Presbyterian chaplain, a role designed to offer Christian studies or religious education to students along with regular worship and pastoral care, aligned to the Presbyterian ethos, traditions and policies.

These days, there are 14 school campuses across the country with associations to the Presbyterian Church.

"Each of these schools shares the special character of a Christian ethos within the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition," says Sharon, who took on her current role supporting and resourcing Presbyterian chaplains in May 2014.

"Chaplains do real coalface-type ministry work. Schools these days are largely secular and in fact only around 5-10 per cent of our students claim an active Christian faith. Chaplains provide an opportunity to engage these students with religion in general and Christianity in particular. Sometimes, it's the only opportunity students have to experience worship, to learn about religion and reflect on faith."

Five chaplains from Presbyterian schools share with us the importance of having chaplains in their schools and what attracted them to school chaplaincy.

## Rev Reuben Hardie, chaplain, St Kentigern Schools, Auckland

It was a case of "keeping it in the family" for Reuben when he took up his full-time role as chaplain at St Kentigern Boys School and St Kentigern Girls School in 2010.

"My brother Caleb had been the chaplain here for the last four years but decided to go back into parish ministry," says Reuben.

"I love the challenge of creating and delivering messages to 800 or so students each week who would openly yawn at me if it was boring! A school is such a vibrant community to be a part of."

In August last year chaplains gathered for a chaplains and religious education teachers conference held at Rangī Ruru Girls' School, Christchurch.

While there's an understanding from the families that students at St Kent's are expected to take part in chapel and Christian education classes, at the same time Reuben says students of other faiths are encouraged to share their perspective and traditions.

As well as teaching Christian education classes and pastoral care, he also takes PE and coaches rugby and tennis teams, runs the service programmes at both schools and takes weekly chapel services at both schools, as well as family services on a Sunday.

"I think schools are an amazing opportunity for mission and ministry. I get to speak God's love into the lives of children each week, as well as their families and school staff. Increasingly, as the number of children attending Sunday school in the Church diminishes, I think it's through Bible in Schools programmes and church schools that children are going to hear about Jesus and the amazing difference he can make to their lives."

## Ellie Burge, chaplain, Religious Studies teacher, Iona College

"I've been at Iona College for five years and this is my first chaplaincy position," says Ellie.

"It's a full-time role but I'm also an occasional member of the ministry team at St Paul's Church, Napier."

Although Ellie found the first year "extremely challenging", it now truly fits with her faith, suits her skill base and fosters her interest in the development of young women.

It's certainly a busy role: as well as teaching religious studies to Years 7-12 students and developing and monitoring service options for Year 13, she is also responsible for linking with the community to identify service options for students, providing chapel services three times a week and special services, as well as acting as a wedding celebrant for Iona Old Girls.

"It's important to have a Presbyterian chaplain in each school to help bring the traditions and ethos of the Church to enhance and support their school environment," says Ellie.

She enjoys teaching students of different faiths ("Our focus is very much on positive and effective relationships with ourselves, each other and with something beyond ourselves") but says her role at Iona will be her final full-time professional role.

"I am absolutely blessed to end my working life in such an intellectually challenging and stimulating creative position."





Chaplain the Rev Barry Kelk before the McClashan College school assembly.



The Rev Geoffrey Skilton, chaplain at Columba College, addresses senior students.

### Rev Warren Fortune, Lindisfarne College, Hastings

Having had four parish experiences, Warren was keen to experience ministry in a “new and different context”.

He took up his full-time role as chaplain at Lindisfarne in January 1996: “The opportunity of sharing faith issues and encouraging young people to reflect on, and experience, the reality of God in their lives is both challenging and exciting”.

Along with leading the College community in worship, teaching religious studies to all levels (14 classes a week) and involvement in tutor groups and student mentoring programmes, Warren also offers pastoral care to students, staff and families and leads worship for local congregations when asked.

“Whether Presbyterian or another denomination, the role of chaplain in our Presbyterian schools is a crucial one,” says Warren. “What’s most important is to have someone who’s passionate about their faith, who’s able to share their faith in a way that encourages students to engage positively with faith issues, of being open to God in the world and in their lives.”

And while the nature of Presbyterian schools is that Christianity is central to the school’s ethos and training, Warren embraces the fact that “our schools are multicultural and multi-religious”.

“What’s crucial in engaging with students of other faiths is respect.”

Warren believes chaplains “have a privileged role in influencing young people’s lives in such a meaningful and life-changing way” and he intends to continue doing this as long as he is able.

### Rev Barry Ross Kelk, chaplain John McGlashan College, Dunedin

Most people have one job, but Barry has three! The 62-year-old splits his time between his family photography firm, Kelk Photography (17 hours a week), as a minister for his local parish (20 hours) and around 12 hours as chaplain at John McGlashan College.

“I was a teacher before I was a photographer and a minister so it’s a good fit with my skills and experience. I’ve been a chaplain for a year now and spend my time providing liturgical and pastoral care and overseeing the Christian education teachers and curriculum.”

Barry’s chaplain role sees him spend Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons on pastoral care, prep and student support. He also takes two early student support/prayer meetings and chapel on Fridays.

“I’ve always believed that ministers should be in community work, or employed or in chaplaincy or something else away from the church office which can engulf them. This allows them to stay community focused and available and, personally, it fits very well with my multi-careers.”

### Rev Geoffrey Skilton, chaplain, Columba College, Dunedin

Having been a minister in Whangarei and Dunedin, Geoffrey took up his part-time role at Columba College in 2011, a role he shared with Rev Barry Kelk until the end of 2014.

Chaplaincy, he says, offered the “edgy excitement of an added aspect of ministry”.

“It’s important to have a chaplain in the school to offer an identifiable witness to Jesus and to assist individuals and communities to recognise and name God’s presence,” says Geoffrey.

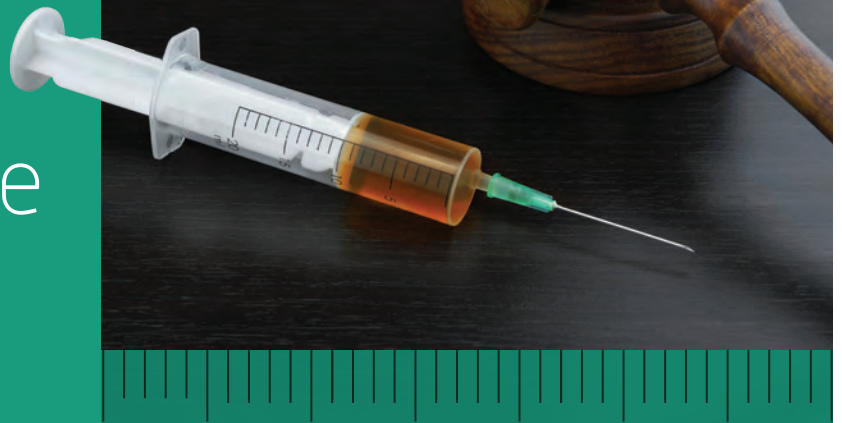
Geoffrey’s role involves six to eight hours a week within a full-time parish ministry. It is non-teaching and focused primarily on chapel leadership, but there is also a pastoral component, including assisting Columba College’s relationship with a school in Vanuatu.

Geoffrey says it’s always a challenge to balance parish tasks and chaplaincy but says he enjoys contributing to the school and church communities.

“We may well be living in a time when the chaplain is the only connection with the Presbyterian Church for most families. The school, therefore, is the only identifiable church community. What wonderful opportunities there could be for chaplains who have significant relationships through the school community with respect to the sacraments and other pastoral events such as weddings.”

Sharon Stephenson | [Spanz](#)

# Death with dignity possible under current law says ICBC



**Public debate about physician-assisted dying tends to turn a complex subject into a simple yes or no argument. The Interchurch Bioethics Council (ICBC) has submitted to the government in-depth reasons why a change in legislation is not desirable.**

Public opinion is insufficient when it comes to making good legislation, says Dr Helen Bichan, one of the Presbyterian Church's representatives on the InterChurch Bioethics Council.

"People frequently don't understand the issues," she says. "Unless you have close experience of the dying process, you're unaware of how far palliative care has come in recent years in relieving suffering, and the degree of choice available in treatment. Decisions about whether or not to continue treatment are normally made after discussion with the patient and family."

Clear definitions are important, Helen points out, because the intention is the critical difference. The ICBC emphasises that actively assisting to kill another person and withdrawing treatment are not one and the same thing. Physician-assisted dying could be seen to include palliative care, which aims to enable dignified dying and accepts that adequate pain relief may, occasionally, hasten death.

A 2015 survey by Auckland University<sup>1</sup> of over 15,000 Kiwis showed that only 12 percent were opposed to physician-assisted dying, although a Research New Zealand poll conducted just after lawyer Lecretia Seales passed away in June last year showed a decline in support from 74 percent to 67 percent.

According to ICBC, current law and palliative care already protects the rights of vulnerable people and allows for death with dignity. In their submission, ICBC make the point that a change in the law would cross a fundamental legal and ethical boundary, since respect for the lives of others goes to the heart of our criminal and human rights laws.

"We recommend instead that skilled palliative care be publicly funded and made freely available," Helen explains. "We would also like to see support for vulnerable groups and for carers strengthened."

The submission puts forward the Christian perspective of compassion for the suffering of others. The cost of a law change is too great, it argues.

"It would have widespread repercussions for the way we understand life and our duties and callings," explains Helen, who has specialist qualifications in both psychiatry and public health medicine. "We forget in an individualistic society that we are never out of relationship with other human beings, even when we need the care of others in order to survive. Autonomy is about being a person right from birth through to death."

In this respect, she says, we have much to learn from other cultures that consider death a natural part of life, and that there is value in accompanying loved ones on the last stages of a journey, even when the experience is a hard one.

Elder abuse is of growing concern. A law change could also impact on this, and other vulnerable, at-risk populations, whose lives are often regarded as of less value. Disability groups say "No decisions about us without us", which the ICBC whole-heartedly supports. It also acknowledges that New Zealand works hard on suicide prevention and a change in legislation could undermine those efforts.

Although New Zealanders increasingly see ourselves as a secular society, Helen questions what is meant by that definition. "My reading shows that spirituality is actually alive and well. It may not be manifest as organised religion but we've found that people don't have to be church members to relate to spirituality. I seriously question secularity as a criterion for having a utilitarian attitude to people."

The ICBC submission backs its arguments with international experience. In the USA, 40-60 percent of those who used legally prescribed lethal drugs to end their lives cited concerns that they would be a burden on their families. In the Netherlands – one of the first to introduce physician-assisted euthanasia in 2002 – the practice has incrementally extended beyond terminal cancer to include new categories and non-voluntary euthanasia.

Any changes to legislation in this country should, the submission recommends, at least include assessment by two independent physicians, a patient advocate, compulsory doctor/family conferences and robust statistical records.

The ICBC will speak to its submission at a Health Select Committee hearing later this year. The Presbyterian Church's Doctrine Core Group is also looking at the issue and may bring a position statement to General Assembly in November.

Jade Reidy Spanz

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study. [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=1161253](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=1161253)



# Fellowship draws students to Chinese church

## A Cantonese Christian fellowship for university students is helping bring young people into the Auckland Chinese Presbyterian Church.

Around 15-20 Cantonese-speaking students from Auckland University now regularly attend Bible study on a Friday evening at the church and enjoy time to share and make friends.

The idea began three years ago, when Rev Micah Tang first arrived from Hong Kong as Auckland Chinese Presbyterian Church's minister. Most of the church's members were older so he looked for ways they could connect with young people and regenerate the church.

Micah speaks both Cantonese and Mandarin. While the majority of Chinese students in Auckland are Mandarin speakers, Micah decided to focus on the around 100 Cantonese students from Hong Kong and Guangzhou, because his resources are limited.

"One day we hope to have more resources, to expand this outreach," he says, "but for now the Cantonese students are our focus."

The fellowship is in its third year, and has been a learning curve.

"In the first year we had a wrong strategy by just making a party and some follow up events with teaching," says Micah. "But in year two we registered CCF as a university club. This attracted more students so we started 2016 with eight new members of the church. Some others had graduated and moved on."

Orientation Week provided a good opportunity to set up an information table and distribute flyers to potential new members. This attracted a further 20 new students to the fellowship.

The main aim of the gatherings is to build a real relationship with God.

"We share honestly that it's about faith and Christian love," explains Micah. "Most are non-believers and it's their first time to connect with a church, so they're still trying to understand what Christianity is."

Each gathering on a Friday begins with a joint worship session and Bible study period, together with a young professionals group within the church. The Cantonese students then divide into three small groups to further share what they have learnt. There is also time for personal sharing and some students do testimony, which Micah says helps them stay closer to the faith. The evening closes with a prayer. If they are lucky, Micah also cooks a shared Asian-style dinner. "That's if I have enough energy," he adds.

"It's all still very preliminary," says Micah. "We first need to build relationships with the students."

Support comes in the form of helping students when they face struggles in their lives, and also providing activities that relieve their homesickness. At Easter the students had a barbecue and karaoke party at Micah's house. Over the last term break Micah took members of

the fellowship to Rotorua for two days and a night, to stay together and make deeper friendships.

The fellowship has two further group leaders, church elders Matthew Lai and his wife Edith Poon, who is social media adept.

"Whatsapp, Wechat and Facebook are our crucial communication channels," she says. "Providing responses to their posts or posting on these communication media helps enhance our understanding and friendship."

She was excited to see two of the fellowship members, Siu Chun and Edison, become baptised in April this year. "This came about from a few combined factors, namely our fellowship, our Sunday worship and their relationship built among other church members."

Edith has had a vision to serve the students for quite a while and joined the ministry because of her husband Matthew Lai's initiative.

"God truly is the one who leads. We started to serve in 2015 when another couple, Daisy and Samson, initiated CCF with Rev Tang," she explains. "We prayed hard and left both semesters to our Lord that we might have sufficient number of new students joining the fellowship to keep it running. God has kept watching over this ministry. I love sharing the gospel with them and I pray that those Christians in our fellowship are going to deepen their relationship with God."

The fellowship has a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/CantoneseChristianFellowship](http://www.facebook.com/CantoneseChristianFellowship) and there is also information on Auckland University's website at [www.allteams.co.nz/cantonese-christian-fellowship](http://www.allteams.co.nz/cantonese-christian-fellowship).

Jade Reidy Spnz

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# GA theme unveiled

**Moderator-designate the Rev Richard Dawson has chosen “Hope for the World” as the theme for General Assembly 2016.**

“Hope is one of the things the Church cannot do without,” says Richard.

“The Bible sees the church as hope for the world. We must have hope in our story and in ourselves if we want to inspire hope in others.”

Richard believes there are many factors today that are robbing the Church of hope: a general decline in the acceptance of the church in society; a decrease in attendance of young people who inherently bring youthful vibrancy and energy; and divisions over issues of sexuality.

“We haven’t done ourselves any favours by the way we have coped with controversy around sexual matters. All these things have made it more difficult for people to hold on to hope,” he says.

“I believe having a couple of years really focussing on being hopeful and developing hopeful processes would be good for us.

“We have allowed processes that are like old wine skins to try to deal with new wine. For example, I believe the way we do business at General Assembly is outmoded. It is hard for many people who go. Much of the debate is in large plenary sessions, which for many people is scary. They find it difficult to speak to such a large group, particularly about personal things.”

The large number of people who left the business floor when the issue of same-sex marriage was discussed looms large in the memory of those who were there on both sides of that argument, he says. “The people who led that walkout spoke to me about how unproductive our processes in these areas had been for the past three decades. I think we have to sit up and take notice of that kind of action and find a better process.”

Richard has invited the Canadian pastor, counsellor and academic Dr Rod Wilson to be the keynote speaker at General Assembly 2016. Dr Wilson’s speech will focus on his contention that in St Paul’s “faith, hope and love” there has been much more emphasis on faith and love than on hope.



The General Assembly 2016 logo draws its inspiration from one of the passages in the Bible that embodies God’s generosity to humankind – where Jesus feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish

## Hopeful logo

The General Assembly logo that Richard has chosen draws its inspiration from one of the passages in the Bible that embodies God’s generosity to humankind – where Jesus feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). Through this story we are reminded that our problems are never too large for God to handle, and with this comes hope, says Richard.

Developing an image that symbolises something of the Church’s diversity was also important, so the logo features elements that are representative of the diverse cultural groups that make up the Presbyterian Church in Aotearoa New Zealand today, explains Richard.

The fish is in the traditional fish-hook style called Te Matau a Maui in Maori culture and throughout the Pacific. Te Matau a Maui is the design of the fish-hook Maui used when he fished up the North Island of Aotearoa. After this event fish hooks throughout the Pacific incorporated this design, explains Te Aka Puaho Moderator, the Rev Wayne Te Kaawa.

Wayne says that the koru-like symbol (one of the three circle images above the fish) is actually Nga Tapuwae o Uenuku or “the sacred footsteps of the ancestor Uenuku”. In mythology Uenuku is the person who dwelt in the rainbow, says Wayne. “The rainbow represents peace as well as the glory of God, and of course, there is the biblical story of the rainbow,” he says.

An important symbol in Chinese culture, the plum blossom, also features in the logo design (one of the three circle images above the fish). As the first flower to bloom each year, the plum blossom is a symbol of renewal. A stylised flower common in Pasifika artwork, tattoos, and designs is also part of the “Hope for the World” logo which will be used at General Assembly 2016 and for the duration of Richard’s term as Moderator.

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)



# Resourcing at Assembly

## **ON 15-19 NOVEMBER, GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016 will be held in Dunedin at the University of Otago.**

A resourcing conference for non-commissioners will run in parallel with General Assembly and will feature a range of workshops and streams including:

- Marty Folsom on relationality in the church
- Rev Helen Harray on Christian counselling
- KCML principal Rev Dr Steve Taylor and Jill Kayser national coach of Kids Friendly will run a series of workshops on emergent church models
- Rev Phil King coordinator of Global Mission on being involved in global mission
- The Otago University department of theology will discuss aspects of theological work.



GA16 will be held at the University of Otago

Commissioners will have the opportunity to attend one of the workshops later in the week.

A **ministers' only training day** will be held during the day on 15 November.

More information about the programme, fees, accommodation options, workshops and other details will be published on the dedicated General Assembly 2016 website in June.

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## THE ALL NEW 2016 PROPERTY HANDBOOK

# The Property Handbook

### A GUIDE FOR PARISHES & PRESBYTERIES WHEN DEALING WITH PROPERTY

For the past several months the Trustees have been working on a new edition of the Property Handbook that will provide parishes and Presbyteries with a comprehensive guide to the wide variety of property matters they now have to deal with.

It covers in detail the processes around selling, buying and leasing property, undertaking major renovations and building projects, subdividing land, the use of capital funds, borrowing by parishes, gifting of property or funds and lottery grants.

There's also information about dealing with the property of closed congregations, about the constraints of land use that can result from heritage listings and local authority controls, about health & safety and earthquake prone buildings, and about property maintenance and insurance.

In order to keep the Property Handbook right up to date and relevant, it will not be printed in hard copy. Instead, it will shortly be available on the Trustees' page of the Church's website, where it can be updated as and when required. You will be able to download and print the whole Handbook, or just the particular section you need.

**Keep a lookout for the 2016 Property Handbook at [www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-parishes/church-property-trustees/the-property-handbook](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-parishes/church-property-trustees/the-property-handbook)**

**Enquires for the Trustees can be made to:  
The Executive Officer, Kos van Lier  
Presbyterian Church Property Trustees  
(04) 381 8296 or [kos@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:kos@presbyterian.org.nz)**

# THEOLOGYMATTERS

## Self-emptying: the pathway to a full life



**I have the privilege of supporting a newly arrived refugee family from Syria.**

During the Red Cross refugee support volunteer training we were asked to list the things that we value about life in New Zealand today. We quickly filled up our pieces of paper with all manner of things which we hold dear and see as key to our culture and lifestyle in Aotearoa.

Once we had completed our list the trainer asked us to rip our pieces of paper up into little pieces! That is the experience of a refugee, she said. Everything has been torn away from them, everything (and often, most of the people) that they hold dear, the things that give them a sense of belonging, identity and purpose – all of them have gone.

For a refugee family there has been an involuntary stripping away and emptying out of life. It creates a real vulnerability and a need to trust others for guidance and support as they settle into their new country.

I don't want to minimise the awful trauma, loss and grief that is part of the refugee experience, which sits alongside relief at being in a safe place and deep gratitude for the opportunity to start again. The experience of supporting a refugee family though has added to my reflecting about the stance Jesus took in his life which is known as *kenosis*, or self-emptying.

Jesus' self-emptying is beautifully described in Philippians 2:1-13 which is often considered to be one of the first hymns in the early Church:

*"Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness... And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name..."*

What is it that Jesus is choosing to empty himself of? It appears to be a choice to fully embrace being human, to stand alongside us in our humanity, to let go of the need for power, glory and control and instead to seek God's will for his life. As a consequence, Jesus seems to be particularly interested in those who have experienced life as "emptied out" ... the shunned, the misunderstood, the judged, the disempowered, those on the edges of respectable community. Over and over again these are the people Jesus gravitates towards and draws into God's circle of compassion, healing and belonging.

In taking this stance, Jesus stands firmly in line with God's will, revealing God's agenda, reminding us of God's nature which is grounded in self-giving love. It is a stance which takes him all the way to the cross and which is vindicated in the resurrection and as biblical scholar William Loader says, means that Jesus receives the name Lord because he "really does reveal God and the way God is".

Paul implores the Philippians (and us) to adopt the same stance, the same attitude of *kenosis*. It's an invitation to choose to read our lives through the lens of Jesus' life... to fully open ourselves to God's life and love working in and through us, to act with generosity and hospitality towards others, to stand in solidarity with those on the edges, to live in ways which are self-giving rather than self-serving.

Emptying ourselves as we choose to follow Jesus' path of *kenosis* is, I suspect, no I trust, the pathway to life being very full indeed.

– Rev Sharon Ensor Ross is director of the Presbyterian Church Schools' Resource Office in Wellington. Read more about her experience as a Red Cross volunteer on page 7.



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M: 027 637 70 87

E: [rastrahl@hotmail.com](mailto:rastrahl@hotmail.com)

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# PRESS GO:

## Good things are worth waiting for

**Fundraising can be hard work and always takes longer than expected, but this is one way Press Go is assisting congregations such as St Barnabas in Plimmerton.**

St Barnabas decided seven years ago to inject a new sense of mission into their church, one that was outreach focused. Alongside going out into the community, they also realised the need to make their own premises more user-friendly and accessible.

"The gist of it was that we wanted to be a mission congregation," says minister the Rev Richard McLean. "To achieve that the church needed a building that was community focused and fit for purpose. The purpose came first and has determined the rebuild project."

St Barnabas' facilities were single use, with a main hall that had a collection of small rooms at the back. These rooms could only be accessed through the hall so the layout lacked flexibility.

"We needed independent access to the spaces in order to use them for multiple purposes at the same time without interruption," says Richard.

The church's building committee had already commissioned a concept design when Lisa Wells was appointed as Press Go Catalyst in 2014. Some funds had been raised and earmarked for the project, but overall the cost was around \$3.5 million, so the focus needed to turn to raising the remaining funds.

At Press Go's recommendation, St Barnabas hired a professional fundraiser for six months, whose contract fee was paid by PressGo. The fundraiser's task was to direct members of the congregation in carrying out a capital fundraising appeal. Over \$430,000 in new funding was pledged during this period by members of the congregation.

"The outcome was much better than if we'd done this work ourselves," says Richard. "We continue to approach other fundraising bodies but are delighted with this response from our members."

Lisa points to the importance of the congregation being the first givers.

"I say to every congregation I talk to: When looking at who should fund a project, put family first," she says. "Otherwise, why should any other funding body give its support? The family has to show they're prepared to make it happen. People give to people and you have to ask to receive gifts of the size and number necessary to achieve your target."

The funding committee at St Barnabas continues to receive support and advice from Press Go as they gear up to enter stages one and two of the building process, having almost raised the funds required for these.

"Press Go is a great innovation in the life of the church," Richard says. "Having Lisa available to walk alongside us also helps us not to forget the mission, the real purpose behind this project."

The church has bought an adjoining property and will be moving old buildings off-site later in the year so that the new hall and community rooms can begin to take shape. Stages three and four – a sanctuary and landscaping – can then be carried out when the last \$1 million has been raised. This pay-as-you-go process means bridging finance is unlikely to be sought, which helps ease the pressure, says Richard, for whom this is his first major project in New Zealand. He arrived in New Zealand from South Africa in 2009 and was appointed minister in 2010.

Completion date is likely to be 10 years since the mission and vision were first proposed. "It's been seven years of talk," says Richard, "with the local body process taking an entire year and people becoming frustrated with progress. It was reassuring to talk with a Press Go board member who said 10 years is normal."

Richard believes the pace of the project will visibly speed up this year and motivate further donations.

"The congregation hasn't seen anything change on the site yet, but once the houses are shifted I believe it will make a big psychological difference and the last of the money we need will hopefully start to come in."

To get in touch with Press Go, contact Lisa at [lisa@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:lisa@presbyterian.org.nz) or on 027 4455 723.

Jade Reidy Spanz

## The Tindall Foundation Funding Applications

Presbyterian Support New Zealand is The Tindall Foundation Faith Funding Manager for Presbyterian organisations and parishes. We are pleased to invite applications for the 2016 funding round.

The Foundation allocates funds to PSNZ for distribution to projects undertaken by

Presbyterian Support regional organisations and Presbyterian and Union parishes under the *Supporting Families and Communities* criteria.

Donations of up to \$15,000 per project can be made. Applications for projects meeting the criteria are now open.

**The closing date is Friday 24 June.**

For funding criteria and application forms please visit our website: [ps.org.nz](http://ps.org.nz)





# Working with youth is a privilege

**Rob Williams is an innovative youth worker at St Peter's Presbyterian Church, Tauranga.**

While many churches grapple with the question of how to get more young people involved in faith and community, Rob Williams and the St Peter's youth group are out doing random acts of kindness – as far away as the Philippines.

Rob says he aims at living out the foundational elements of biblical Christianity – providing “an opportunity to do those things, not just hear about them”.

“We do simple things like standing at the supermarket and putting away people's trolleys. We're involved with the Mercy Ship that does eye surgery overseas; we jumped on and did a working bee.”

In 2007 the group went to Vanuatu, and has been to the Philippines every second year since.

“We've done everything from helping out orphanages to visiting people on Trash Mountain in Manila.” Among their chosen tasks have been giving out clothes, helping build a house, hospital visiting and going into a prison and praying for people. “We were in with the inmates; nothing between us and them except two metres of dirt.”

Those involved in the youth group include both young people whose parents have encouraged them to be involved and those who have no church background. Girls outnumber the boys.

Most young adults leave town when they leave school as Tauranga does not have a university.

Some who have been involved in the youth group have gone on to study theology. One has become a missionary doctor. “There are some pretty inspiring stories. Then there are some who head off and the world takes over.”

Rob has lived in Tauranga since he was three. He took on the youth worker role in 2002. “Someone asked me to fill in for six weeks, and never came back.”

“I was raised in the Catholic Church but didn't find a connection with God. I had a radical conversion experience when



Rob Williams in conversation with locals during a St Peter's youth group mission outreach in the Philippines.

I was about 20. I had been living the typical life of the world – drinking, stealing, sleeping around – and all of a sudden I felt the accumulated grief and regret from all the decisions I had made. That led me to search for something better than me that was able to help – God.

“I went to a Promise Keepers conference with one of the elders at St Peter's and had a conversion – a conversion of forgiveness. It was remarkably inspirational. It was a great sense of release from all the guilt and regret. Salvation had come.

“I began going to church at that point. I was asked to help out with the group because I was 25 and was seen as a young person who might be interested.”

He worked two jobs at the time, as a first aid instructor and duty manager at a restaurant.

Rob is now full-time as St Peter's youth worker, and works with other Presbyterian churches, for example in the regional Easter Camp.

He encourages others to get involved with youth work.

“I often find people don't believe they can be helpful. They say they're too old, not cool enough. Some say they feel ‘irrelevant’ or say teenagers intimidate

them. But anyone who just wants to be real within themselves and share a love of God can communicate beyond those cultural boundaries.

“It doesn't take long until you feel comfortable around them and realise that they don't want to embarrass you, they want to learn from you.

“I am supported by a team of leaders. There are other people around to bring ideas, challenges and corrections.

“It's quite easy for youth work to become something done in a vacuum from the larger congregational work – shuffle youth work over to the hall. I don't think that's useful or helpful. It should be part of the church so young people see the development of faith through the generations from where they are: at university, young marrieds, as parents, as older people.

“They see what people's faith means to them. And they hear the voices of encouragement: keep it up, you can do it, it's going to get hard sometimes, but you can make it.

“It's a remarkable privilege and source of inspiration to work with kids – to share in the story of God moving in their lives.”

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)



# FEEDING FAITH IN THE PHILIPPINES

St Peter's in the City Presbyterian Church in Tauranga and Weston Presbyterian Church in Waiareka are both embarking on valuable mission work in the Philippines

**Columba Waiareka – Weston Church has been involved in mission in the Philippines for many years. “At Weston, we have a number of Filipino families,” says the Rev Nancy Parker. “Many work on dairy farms in the Waiareka Valley. They all have family back in the Philippines, so it seemed important to make those connections.”**

The church's music director is also Filipino, and worked with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in the Philippines and elsewhere as a young man. “He married an Oamaru girl there, who was also working with YWAM, hence even stronger connections for us with the Filipino people,” says Nancy.

The church's mission in the Philippines began four years ago, and last year a team of 12 returned to help in areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan. They spent the first ten days based at Imelda Village, in the YWAM base known as Imelda House. There, the men worked on constructing toilet and shower units and other building and maintenance work, while the women went out into the city of Bantayan to work in areas of great need where churches had been planted. “We spent our time handing out gifts to the children, giving them stamps for their hands and getting to know them,” recalls elder Susan Moore. “One area we visited had borne the brunt of the storm surge,

and the people said if only they had called it a tsunami we would have understood how serious it was.”

The locals talked to the team about their traumatic experiences. “A few of the people told us how they had to loot to survive in the days following the typhoon,” Susan recalls. “It was very troubling for them so we told them it was okay as they had no other choice in the circumstances. We prayed for them and comforted them.”

Taking part in feeding programmes for the children was rewarding but tough. “Mothers came to me and took my hand with tears in their eyes,” says youth and children's pastor Nicola Botting, who was also a member of the team. “The look in their eyes said it all. I cannot imagine as a parent how hard it must be to worry every day about how to feed your children — the pressure they must feel.”

One morning, the team went to feed what was supposed to be 100 children, but because of a fire displacing more than 70 families, they ended up feeding more than 200. “It was so great to be helping these people in their time of need,” says Susan.

The team also ran a medical program in Cebu. “It was a 35 degree day, and it was incredibly dirty, dusty, and smelly,” recalls Nicola. “We were perched on the side of the hill — no shade, no shelter. People lined up with numbers, and sat there until it was their turn. Some

were waiting for hours. Not one person complained, and at no time was there a cross word.”

Nicola particularly remembers an elderly woman who had to be examined by the doctors in full view of the crowd. “My heart ached for this lady, and I asked our guys quietly and discreetly to form a wall behind her as best we could. This is their life. They don't have the option of a private doctor's room or a quiet waiting room. We are so incredibly fortunate.”

Thanks to the generosity of the church community, the team was able to provide much-needed vitamins, antibiotics, asthma medications and eczema treatments to the families. “I cannot even begin to explain how grateful they all were,” says Nicola. “The gratitude and thankfulness is something I'll never forget.”

“We were treated so well and it was a life changing experience,” says Susan. “To see these people with so little and so happy made me question the lives we live in wealthy countries. Things are just things! Serving God, knowing God, and making our families and friends a priority is what's important.”

Holly Morton, one of the young people on the trip, was so moved by her experiences that she wrote a poem, Tahanan, (meaning “home” in Filipino) and entered it in the national schools poetry competition, in which she was a runner up. Read the poem at <http://www.schoolspoetryaward.co.nz>





The Columba Waiareka - Weston Church's overseas mission team of 12 helped out in areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan.

**Every other year, St Peter's takes a St Peter's youth mission team to the Philippines.** They recently completed their fourth trip, where they partnered with various mission organisations to help out at orphanages and assist with feeding programmes for impoverished children. They also shared testimonies and Bible studies with the local people.

Youth pastor Rob Williams organised the trip. "We're realistic and honest about the trips, in that the main reason we go is for the impact it has on our young people," says Rob. "You can only do so much in two weeks, but the kids who went will remember it forever. Their world is now bigger and deeper."

Assistant minister the Rev Cate Burton was also part of the group. "My role was to support the leadership team and provide pastoral care for the teenagers," she says. "Really, the leadership team was there to encourage the young people — it was the young people themselves who built relationships with the local people. Watching the kids really engage with the experience was very cool."

This time, the team included a doctor, so the group was able to do medical outreach, particularly for the impoverished Mangyan tribal people. "We trained the kids to take blood pressure and temperatures, and had a team of them on triage, tracking families through all the stages of their treatment," recalls Cate.

"We'd done plenty of fundraising so we took over lots of basic medication to give out, things like Panadol."

The team also brought clothes for the children. "It was very rewarding to see the kids turning up in just a shirt, or nothing at all, and to be able to give them some face painting, some love, some food, and as many clothes as they could carry," says Rob.

The young people helped with a church service, doing dance, skits and drama. They used dance and drama in the Biblical presentations they made at the local schools too, and played basketball and soccer with the kids after school, forming strong connections and making friends.

Nonetheless, it was hugely challenging for the young people to see the extremes of poverty and desperation. "Feeding a small child in your arms and knowing they'll most likely be sold into prostitution by their parents can't help but shock you and change your perspective," says Rob.

While in the Philippines, the team caught up with Danny and Lily Besoro, who attended St Peter's while living in New Zealand. They provide education for the Mangyan children in Calapan, who walk for miles to stay with them during the week and learn. Tragically, the recent typhoon destroyed everything they'd been working on.

"Danny was lying in the top bunk with the flood waters rising around him, wondering if he'd need to get on the roof," says Rob. "The flooding was so severe, everything was ruined. We've fundraised for the basics — getting books, getting Danny's truck working again, and laying gravel on the track so the children can walk there without getting knee deep in mud — but it'll be a long process to rebuild."

Prior to Danny and Lily's work with the Mangyan children, they ran a kindergarten and community care for children who live on a huge rubbish dump in Manila. This work has now been taken over by Ric and Louie Mendoza. "The government has taken over their building and is trying to move families off the rubbish dump, but without really giving them anywhere else to go," says Rob. "Ric and Louie still serve the community in Tongo, the most impoverished part of Manila."

Rob would encourage people who think mission trips of this kind are too hard to organise to look into it, as they might be pleasantly surprised. "The trips are a great thing, and there are some fantastic resources out there, so they're pretty doable," he says. "We aimed to raise \$20,000 for the trip and exceeded that, so we were able to leave chunks of money with each of the agencies we partnered with for them to spend as they chose."

Kate Davidson [@Spanz](#)





## Church volunteers continue to help heal Vanuatu

**Cyclone Pam was the most intense tropical cyclone of 2015. It had a devastating effect on Vanuatu. One year on, the Church's mission partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, Pacific Vision Vanuatu, is still actively supporting recovery.**

"It's magic having a team up there. They're so confident and contributing so well," says the Rev Phil King, Global Mission coordinator. "And it's great to see how well accepted and valued they are. We have a wonderful partnership model."

Shirley and Don Anton were on their way home in November when a meeting in Port Vila with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu education secretary Jonathan Tarip changed their plans. They decided to accept the calling to return in February to new roles in the Assembly Office in Port Vila.

"We both felt there were roles that aligned philosophically with our faith – not just 'doing for' but strengthening people and structures," says Shirley.

The PCV has taken over responsibility for some government schools. Don is developing policy and procedures so the schools can become registered training providers while Shirley is developing cross-curricula writing skills and resources for literacy development.

Generous donors have offered to pay the rent for their furnished flat in Vila. Life in Vila, they say, is significantly different to their previous placement at Talua.

"Talua is a beautiful rural setting but 20km from Luganville along a very potholed road. Here in Vila it takes 10 minutes to walk to the central market and downtown."

Joining them in Vila from February to April was Bron Markham, a nurse from Carterton. She tutored students in first



As well as assisting with dental outreach Gloria Jones works with students at the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu's Seaside school in Port Vila.

aid and resuscitation techniques at the Korvan Community Health School. Living in one room of the dormitory for female students thrust her into a level of engagement that was a challenge and a privilege, she says.

"I talked to them about adolescence and the plethora of issues tied up with that 'small' topic," she explains, "as well as caring for ill students and advising them on hygiene and nutrition. They're so open and honest and just laugh in a way that infects the entire room."

While many students have the latest smart phones, Bron discovered none had email addresses or any appreciable level of computer skills. She set about remedying that, so the girls can access online learning websites and improve their typing skills.

Bron has worked previously in Papua New Guinea and says that while some expats may arrive with high ideals about changing the world, she had no desire to do other than stand back, watch and learn.

"Ni-Vanuatu people have a depth of wisdom and life experience that has led to an astuteness that is wonderful to work with. I was very much at peace there and would recommend this type of service to people who have the financial freedom."

Neville Jones agrees. Having been there for more than a year, he says the experience has taught him about taking time to form relationships rather than just get the job done.

"Don't expect it to happen soon," he says. "They're not bound by the clock, so they want to sit, talk and make a friend."

Work has progressed, nonetheless. The rebuild of five staff houses and one dormitory at Onesua College is complete. The houses can accommodate 10 teachers with a small family. Most importantly, the construction has provided work for men whose main source of income from coconut crops was destroyed in the cyclone.

Gloria Jones has taken part in two outreach dental trips. All up, 513 patients had 448 teeth extracted over a period of 24 days.

"Having come from a military background in the dental field it was a privilege to share my knowledge of setting up sterile areas in some primitive locations," she says. "We all learnt a lot from each other and I enjoyed training a local medical team in Lamap Malakula. It's a blessing to enrich other people's lives and I can see the year going by very fast."

Gloria is also helping welcome teams arriving through the Church's Global Mission office and there are still opportunities and travel subsidies, for parishes and schools from New Zealand to work alongside local communities and help resource them.

To discuss volunteer opportunities, contact the Rev Phil King on [phil@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:phil@presbyterian.org.nz). To stay in touch with news, visit the Jones' blog site at [www.jonesvanuatu.blogspot.co.nz](http://www.jonesvanuatu.blogspot.co.nz) or download the latest Nambawan newsletter from [www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission/vanuatu](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission/vanuatu)

Jade Reidy Spanz



# International internship offers new perspective

**After five years of studying for a law degree, you'd think that you'd need some time off.**

Not Jordan Grimmer, who spent the summer in South Korea as part of the Church's Global Mission internship programme.

Jordan had seven weeks off between his final exam at Otago University and starting his first job as a judge's clerk at the Auckland High Court.

"I wanted to do something useful with my time off, to learn about the world and the Church's role in it," says Jordan (23).

The Rev Phil King, the Presbyterian Church's Global Mission coordinator, put him in touch with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) who helped facilitate the visit.

Jordan, who has attended church since he was a teenager in Tauranga, spent most of his time in Seoul where he worked alongside churches actively involved in important social justice ministries.

One church he worked with helped migrants from all over Asia.

"Many of these people are in extremely vulnerable positions. Some are workers who've been exploited, others are homeless and most don't have any visible means of support. The PROK works closely with these migrants via its Global Sarang programme. [Sarang means 'love' in Korean]."

This includes a hospital that offers free medical care, a school for migrant children, a feeding kitchen and night shelter.

Jordan's involvement was mainly with the school where he taught English, although he also spent many hours making the Korean side dish kimchi (fermented vegetables) which was distributed to needy migrants.

He also spent time in Jeonju, where he connected with the Rev Kang Sil Lee, who he met when the Korean minister undertook a three-month sabbatical in Dunedin last year.

"It was great to see Kang Sil and to find out how she lives."

A highlight of his trip was visiting a Buddhist monk. "Kang Sil took me trekking through the mountains to have morning tea with the monk. It was interesting to hear about his life and I was honoured to have such an experience."

Another highlight was seeing firsthand how deeply the PROK is involved in the democratic struggle in Korea, particularly around issues such as the reunification of North and South Korea.

"A lot of ministers were out protesting, fearlessly risking their reputations and even possibly facing arrest to support and advance these issues for human rights."

Reflecting on his experiences, Jordan says the trip changed him in many ways.

"I have a new perspective on the importance of the church being active in social and public issues, especially in relation



Jordan Grimmer and friend making the popular Korean side dish kimchi (fermented vegetables) for distribution to migrants in need.

to minorities and migrants and with important issues such as reunification. I'm so glad I was able to educate myself on these issues so that I'm able to tell Kiwis about what's going on over there."

His experiences also reinforced the importance of ministry and mission work, and Jordan says he would definitely recommend it to others.

"If you want to have your faith challenged and your eyes opened, both to the needs of the world and to the church's capacity to help, then I would definitely recommend it."

Jordan would love to return to Korea one day but for now is focusing on engaging with issues in New Zealand.

"I'm developing really good legal skills which I hope to use to help others with social justice issues. My degree was also in theology so at some stage I'd like to explore that side of it but for now, my focus is on the law."

Rev Phil King believes there is great value in having the Church's young people undertake such internships.

"As a Church we need to invest in our young people, to develop the gifts and skills that they have and what they bring to society's future," says Phil. "Fortunately, we have some very strong links with our international church partners which gives our young people the opportunity to participate in a range of experiences in a country very different from their own."

Phil says anyone interested in undertaking an internship should contact him.

"We can talk about where you want to go and I can help customise a programme to suit you. These kinds of experiences are incredibly valuable, not only for the young person but also for the host church."

Sharon Stephenson [Spanz](#)





## The Road from Damascus

**Like his students, Khaled Bastoni is a refugee. He grew up in Yarmouk on the edge of Damascus, Syria. He went to school, graduated with a degree in English literature in 2007 and taught English language to university students. His life was good until 2011 when conflict began to escalate in Syria, and his situation quickly changed.**

When war came to the once flourishing Palestinian refugee community of Yarmouk, he joined his family who had already taken refuge in Lebanon after their home was partially destroyed by a missile.

Yarmouk was once a densely populated and unofficial camp, established in 1957, eight kilometres from the centre of Damascus. Many of the refugees who lived there had been able to take advantage of the educational opportunities available in Syria, and had completed university education or had highly skilled jobs. Living conditions were much better than the rest of the country.

Now all of this has gone. What is left in Yarmouk is destruction and suffering. For the first time since June 2015, in February this year the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees was able to distribute desperately needed humanitarian aid.

Khaled's teaching skills proved useful in Lebanon. He found work at the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees' (DSPR) school in Saida. His classes are never dull and the young students are eager to learn English and discuss the options. At home life might be tough, but at school they have the chance to learn skills and make plans for the future. Many are already planning to rebuild al-Sham, the name for Syria which evokes images of beauty and history.

This determination can be seen in their study habits. They ask for extra classes to make up for lost time. But it is their bravery that is even more inspiring. For the last three years, DSPR Lebanon



Khaled Bastoni teaching English to university students in Lebanon.

has negotiated for year nine and twelve students to return to Damascus to sit their Brevet and Baccalaureate exams so that they have qualifications that are widely recognised. Normally refugees leaving Lebanon are not allowed to return, but every year DSPR Lebanon has been able to negotiate the necessary arrangements.

And when the results come back, the successful students are grateful for the tuition Khaled and the other refugee teachers have provided. With new qualifications, the students have to make the agonising decision about whether to return to university in Syria or stay in Lebanon. Work opportunities in Lebanon are few and far between for the more than one million refugees that have found shelter from the war.

DSPR Lebanon is part of the Middle East Council of Churches which was established in 1950 to help the Palestinian refugee community. For decades they have offered practical help and advocacy to refugee families. They are skilled and compassionate. As the situation in Syria has descended into war, they have continued to expand services to help those who have fled the country.

Christian World Service is asking people to get behind DSPR's work in Lebanon and Jordan by supporting Operation Refugee and celebrating Refugee Sunday.

Operation Refugee is a new initiative for people who want to do more than think about the plight of Syrian refugees. It is an online fundraising effort that provides an opportunity to raise awareness about what is happening to refugees. From 16-20 June, in return for sponsorship, 100 Operation Refugee participants will live on the rations that a Syrian receives. Participants will receive a box of rations and a fundraising toolkit with lots of encouragement. Operation Refugee is based on the "ration challenge" devised by Act for Peace in Australia. Money raised will go direct to DSPR for providing food, medical care and education in Jordan and Lebanon.

CWS is inviting parishes to celebrate Refugee Sunday on 19 June – the nearest Sunday to World Refugee Day on 20 June – by focusing on Syrian refugees. Worship and other resources will be available at [www.cws.org.nz](http://www.cws.org.nz)



# KEEP HOPE ALIVE



## Get more help

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[www.cwsoperationrefugee.nz](http://www.cwsoperationrefugee.nz)

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