

Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

AUTUMN 2013, ISSUE 53

Safe to worship?

Earthquake-prone
buildings



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Faith After An Earthquake

In 2012¹, Chris Sibley and Joseph Bulbulia, studied the impact of the Christchurch earthquake on people's faith, commitment, and wellbeing.

It has long been argued that people turn to religion during times of crisis, and it has also been argued that religious affiliation benefits the faithful at times of extraordinary grief, anxiety, and danger.

We set about investigating these two ideas more thoroughly by developing specific hypotheses that examined how the February 2011 Christchurch earthquake affected deeply held faith commitments and people's views about their own personal health.

The study took into account the level of exposure to the earthquake and also investigated whether the earthquake-affected were more likely to believe in God. Results from those in the Canterbury region were compared to people who live elsewhere in New Zealand.

Our first set of analyses investigated whether the earthquake affected religious conversion rates. Secondly, we investigated whether religious affiliation was associated with overall higher subjective health ratings for those who were affected by the earthquake relative to those who were not.

The research drew on 2009 data about religious affiliation and research undertaken in 2011 following the devastating February 2011 earthquake, which caused extensive damage and killed 185 people.

Impact of earthquake on religious conversion

Philosophers have long maintained that religion functions as an emotional firebreak against anxiety and suffering, and is especially appealing after natural calamities.

Prior studies offer preliminary support for this phenomenon, which is known as the

Religious Comfort Model. A number of studies have discovered that religious faith becomes more appealing after reminders of tragic suffering, danger, randomness, and death. Studies also show that experiences of suffering tend to intensify religious sentiments, an effect that is well explained by comfort-seeking.

The study sought to fill a gap in previous studies on the Religious Comfort Model, by assessing whether the appeal of religion following a large-scale disaster is sufficient to affect rates of religious conversion.

Our research found that religion became more appealing among those exposed to the Christchurch earthquakes, relative to those who were not exposed. This finding offers the first evidence from a large population that religious conversion increases following a natural disaster.

Impact of religious affiliation on personal wellbeing

It has been proposed that in the wake of unusually stressful events, religious comforts offer practical benefits. This concept, known as religious buffering, is recognised in prior research, although discussion varies among researchers about the possible benefits of religious buffering – supporting placebo healing; bolstering cooperation and solidarity; and bringing healthful reductions to anxiety and more.

We tested the hypothesis that religious believers affected by the Christchurch earthquakes or living in the region will report superior health when compared with disbelievers. We also investigated whether those affected by the Christchurch earthquakes, who lose religious faith, will experience health declines relative to believers and longer-standing secularists.

We examined whether religious affiliation was associated with differences in subjective ratings of personal health by asking participants to rate their satisfaction with their level of personal health on a scale from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied).

The research found that merely possessing religious faith did not offer superior



Dr Chris Sibley

buffering advantages for subjective health, yet those who lost their faith and were affected by the Christchurch earthquakes experienced significant declines in subjective health. However, unaffected people who changed from religious believers to non-believers between 2009 and 2011, did not experience similar declines in subjective health. Notably, we found that longstanding disbelievers maintained stable subjective health evaluations after the Christchurch earthquakes.

Research Limitations

Before investigating the processes by which faith affects wellbeing in the wake of a devastating natural disaster, researchers should distinguish between the advantages of having faith and the disadvantages of losing faith.

It is important to recognise that our study leaves many questions unresolved. The association that we observed between loss of faith and diminished subjective well-being might be limited to New Zealand, or to similarly secular societies. Furthermore, the relationship between subjective wellbeing and biological health remains unknown.

Dr Joseph Bulbulia is a senior lecturer at Victoria University specialising in the psychology of religion, he is the president elect of the International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion. Dr Chris Sibley is a senior lecturer in social psychology at the University of Auckland. Download the full study "Faith After An Earthquake" at <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0049648#ack>

1 Sibley CG, Bulbulia J (2012) Faith after an Earthquake: A Longitudinal Study of Religion and Perceived Health before and after the 2011 Christchurch New Zealand Earthquake. PLoS ONE 7(12): e49648. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0049648

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MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

The Right Rev Ray Coster contributes a regular column to *Spanz*



Summer is sport. One of the things that amazes and amuses me watching sport, both in summer and winter, is the depth of statistical analysis that now takes. Watching the Australian Open tennis, we can watch where each ball lands and its trajectory; we are told how many back-hand winners, forehand winners, unforced errors each player makes; and how far each player runs and much more. I understand that once a match is over the player, and his or her team, does video analysis of their self and the opponent. Sport is a serious business.

How well do we do in analysing life and church? Numbers, and the measuring and keeping track of things seem mechanical and impersonal until they are about 'me'. They get personal and matter when it comes to my age, my weight, my cholesterol level, my bank account...

Measuring numbers is a biblical principle. Indeed, we even have a book in the Bible called Numbers. In the Book of Acts, every early chapter has something about counting numbers. I know that some people find this concept almost abhorrent, but it shouldn't be. Every number not only has a story, it also has a heart. Ultimately numbers are about people. For a church to be successful in mission we should be measuring what matters.

When Jesus told the parable about the lost sheep in Luke 15 it is clear that for the shepherd to know that one was missing he had to count. The main point in the parable is not about counting, it's about the one! Hard data is easy to measure, but it is heart data that really matters.

At the start of a New Year let's take time to measure what matters in 2013. In this column I will discuss some things you might consider measuring in your own life. In another I will consider what we might consider measuring in church life:

Relationships. Relationships are everything. When we think about regrets in life, they're almost always attached to personal relationships. What relationships do you need to tend to, invest in and cultivate this year? How will you measure or know if you have grown in that relationship?

Work and Family. One of the hardest things to balance in life is the time given to work and to family, or for a single person the time given to work and time given for self. How will you balance work and family in a way that is equitable to both partners and children? This balance gets harder every year as our culture changes. In the 60s and early 70s more than 70 per cent of families had a mother at home and relied on Dad as the sole income earner. Today those numbers are reversed with 70 per cent of families headed by two working parents or a single working parent. The reason being that average earnings have risen less than one per cent after being adjusted for inflation. Meanwhile, the cost of everything from housing to health care to education has risen steadily. Most families need two incomes just to survive. In America today parents have 22 fewer hours a week to spend with children than they did in 1969. Take time to measure this balance in 2013.

Faith. How will you measure your faith walk this year? Please do not allow this measure to produce a sense of guilt, frustration or legalism. You are loved unconditionally by God and saved by grace. As a resurrection people our faith walk should never bring condemnation, but a sense of freedom. Still, we should be growing closer to God and growing in faith each year. Also, how about measuring your ability to share your faith with someone else? (1 Peter 3: 15)

Service to humanity. As followers of Jesus, one of our highest goals must surely be to help another person. Maybe we could set a goal to help two or three people a week and then take time to measure how well we are doing.

Caring for the needy. If anything is close to the heart of God it is the poor and the vulnerable. Again, I challenge you to measure how well you are doing in 2013 in this aspect of life.

I encourage each of you to personalise this list in your context. May 2013 be a wonderful year of blessing as you measure what matters. If sports people go to so much trouble to measure and analyse a game, how much more should we do in our Christian walk?

The safe use of church buildings

The safe use of church buildings has become especially important since the Canterbury earthquakes. Every denomination in New Zealand is reassessing their buildings' earthquake standards. Christine Gounder looks at how some Presbyterian and Cooperating parishes are responding to discovering that their church buildings are not considered safe for use.

It was with the safety of people in mind that the Presbyterian Church Property Trustees (CPT), at the request of the Council of Assembly, formulated a policy on earthquake-prone church buildings. The policy, which is in accordance with the Building Act 2004, was sent out in August last year, to all churches north of the Waitaki River.

The policy advised parishes and presbyteries that if their buildings were below 20 per cent of earthquake standards they should be closed immediately, and warning notices put up to notify visitors of the status of the building.

The CPT policy was met with dismay by some parishes whose buildings are earthquake-prone.

Assembly Executive Secretary, the Rev Martin Baker, says the CPT policy may be upsetting to some but it affirms the integrity and nature of the Presbyterian Church and its Christian witness and mission.

"Our first concern is for those who use our church buildings and we do not want to place anyone at risk by their worshipping or working in an unsafe environment," he says.

In response to the CPT policy, a number of churches with buildings that fall below minimum earthquake standards have closed their doors and are worshipping elsewhere while they decide on the future of their buildings.

We look at the impact the CPT policy has had by focusing on a few affected churches in Wellington, Hawke's Bay and Wanganui:

Wadestown Presbyterian Church in Wellington was notified in 2008 by Wellington City Council that its buildings were potentially earthquake-prone. In response they had a structural engineering firm evaluate their buildings, and in 2010 it was confirmed that the church and hall were below required earthquake standards.

Minister, the Rev Sharon Ross Ensor, says there were a range of feelings in the congregation when her church closed its doors and began worshipping in September at Queen Margaret College in Thorndon.

"Many felt that while it was unfortunate that the buildings had to be closed they appreciated the need to do this and agreed that people's safety was paramount. Others were unhappy both with the CPT policy, which they felt was unnecessarily restrictive and reactive and what they felt was undue haste and lack of consultation with the congregation by the parish council.

"There was also concern about a lack of resources and support from the national Church for congregations like ours that have to deal with such a significantly stressful and disruptive situation on our own," Sharon says.

She says the strong feelings are understandable as many people identify with their church buildings as "home".

"It is their sacred space and they miss it".

"The buildings create a sense of identity and security, and with our offices and mid-week activities and Sunday worship in different locations, this creates a sense of being scattered and a lack of coherence."

Even though it has been difficult, Sharon says the current arrangements offer a

chance to think about who Wadestown are as a congregation.

"It does provide a timely opportunity to reflect on our church's mission and role at a time when church communities will be obliged to make some difficult choices between the financial demands of their mission and the resources required to maintain existing buildings," she says.

Also in Wellington, **Miramar Uniting** had to vacate their building in October 2012 after an initial assessment from the Wellington City Council rated it temporarily earthquake-prone.

Office administrator, June Stewart, says a lot of people were upset when they were advised by the Methodist Church of New Zealand and CPT that the building had to be vacated.

The congregation felt the loss of no longer having their own base for worship, especially those who had put many years of work and effort into maintaining the building. The church had also recently spent money installing modern seating.

The congregation began worshipping at St Aidan's Anglican Church in Miramar, and even though they were grateful, the change wasn't easy.

"We were coping but found out how difficult it is to maintain your normal church life when you do not have ready access to a building and are reliant on parishioners' goodwill to provide meeting venues, and other churches' goodwill for temporary worship facilities.

"The extra organisation required to continue as 'normally' as possible meant extra work for several people. The feeling of being in limbo was very unsettling for the congregation, the organising committees, and people involved in the daily routine of church life," June says.

The Methodist church mostly owns the building and informed Miramar Uniting in December that they could return to their church for worship because they had changed their policy regarding use of earthquake-prone buildings; the Methodist church had received a report from an engineer who advised that the risk was minimal and recommended Miramar Uniting continue to use the building until earthquake strengthening work is done.

In Seatoun, Wellington, **St Christopher's Presbyterian** was advised by Wellington City Council in 2008 that their building did not meet new building earthquake standards. A detailed evaluation and engineering assessment was obtained in

We know our buildings are unsafe and we shouldn't be putting people at risk by inviting people into them

2011 together with an estimate of the cost of strengthening the church building.

The Rev Barrie Keenan, who was interim moderator at the time, was aware that CPT was developing a policy on the use of earthquake-prone church buildings.

Barrie says views within the congregation were mixed and divided when the impact of the new CPT policy was considered at a congregational meeting.

"The implication was that the church should not be used and we should meet for worship at an alternative venue. However, some of the congregation voiced strong opposition and were not convinced of the risk. They argued that the church had withstood earthquakes since 1926 without significant structural damage," Barrie says.

The decision, in line with the policy, was to move and they are now worshipping in a room of their hall; for funerals they use neighbouring St George's Anglican Church. Barrie says this is still strongly regretted and opposed by some of the church's members.

The proposed cost of strengthening St Christopher's is approximately \$650,000, which will be uneconomic for the small congregation. Wellington Presbytery has established a commission to review the viability of the congregation.

St Columba's Presbyterian Church in Havelock North, Hawke's Bay, was informed by the Hastings District Council two years ago that their buildings – both the church and hall – were earthquake-prone.

Minister, the Rev Roger Gillies, says after receiving the CPT policy, they closed both their buildings, and like other churches in similar situations the congregation did not take the news well.

"We are still talking to the upset ones and are doing our best to try to encourage people to be part of this change. This is the ethical and responsible thing to do and so we have closed our buildings accordingly. We know our buildings are unsafe and we shouldn't be putting people at risk by inviting people into them," Roger says.



Rev Dr Philippa Horrex outside her church, St Paul's/St Marks Presbyterian in Wanganui. The church closed its doors in August and the congregation "are adjusting well to worshipping in the hall", Philippa says.

Lack of support from CPT and the national Church has been felt, Roger says.

"I feel both could have been a bit more responsive to our situation, just to acknowledge our circumstances."

His congregation now worship at St Martin's Chapel at Iona College and are still adjusting.

A meeting will be held soon to review St Columba's future options. These include repairing and strengthening the current building, selling the land and building elsewhere, or selling some of the land to fund a new building on the current site.

Despite the sadness and stress of being unable to use much-loved church buildings, Roger says he encourages parishes with unsafe church buildings to ensure they comply with the CPT policy because "we need to act responsibly".

In Wanganui, **St Paul's/St Marks Presbyterian Church** closed its church doors in August 2012 because of the risk posed by their unsafe building. They moved their worship services to their five-year-old hall next to the church.

"Some of the congregation was accepting of the decision but there was also a considerable level of opposition to the CPT's recommendations", the Rev Dr Philippa Horrex says.

"Comments like 'over reaction' were frequent. A small number of people have been extremely unhappy about the closure of the church and have been vocal about their feelings," Philippa says, with some parishioners saying they were not a proper church if they couldn't worship in the church building. Philippa says she has frequently stressed that the church is the people, not the building.

Despite these initial concerns, the congregation is adjusting well to worshipping in the hall, with some saying that it is more comfortable and that they can 'hear better'. Some have even expressed preferring the hall to the church.

"There is a new freedom to worshipping in the hall; it also doesn't feel as formal. The chairs are more comfortable than church pews and the sound system is better. We have transferred some furniture from the church building and have attempted



June Stewart, administrator of Miramar Uniting Church.

to make the hall feel a little like the church we are used to,” Philippa says.

The 99 year old church was already in the process of seeking permission for strengthening work when the CPT policy came out. Philippa says they intend to continue with this but do not agree with CPT's expectations that the church should be strengthened to 67 per cent of the building code.

“The Government and Wanganui District Council require buildings to be only 33 per cent of the building code. We are in correspondence with CPT to ascertain their future stance on this,” she says.

One member of her congregation who agrees is retired architect, Elwyn Evans.

“For buildings such as schools, constantly in use, and with large populations, strengthening to 67 per cent or even 100 per cent makes sense, but for churches which are only used a few hours a week by comparatively small numbers, a 67 per cent threshold is excessive, and this is recognised by Government policy,” Elwyn says.

His parish has decided that they will try and get approval from the Manawatu/Wanganui Presbytery and CPT to proceed on the basis of achieving the 34 per cent threshold as required by law, rather than follow the CPT policy.

“We feel that CPT and presbytery, rather than being helpful, have created difficulties for us and hope that in future they will be more constructive and sympathetic.”

CPT executive officer, Kos van Lier, says the earthquake ratings required for buildings throughout the country are all different.

He says CPT requires buildings to be 67 per cent of New Building Standard because that is the general accepted standard.

“Our policy is quite strict because we can't afford any mishaps. The risk to people is still high, even if a building is occupied for only two hours on a Sunday.”

After the Canterbury earthquakes, many churches had to temporarily close unsafe church buildings while a decision was made on their future.

The Rev Darryl Tempero has been providing support to Christchurch parishes affected by the earthquakes. He understands the trauma churches affected by the CPT policy are facing.

While acknowledging the pain of not being able to worship in their church building anymore, Christchurch Presbytery is encouraging parishes to think about what it means to be a church in the 21st century.

“So rather than saying ‘we need a building because we don't have one now’, we are saying ‘ask yourselves who is God calling us to be?’ This gets us out of thinking of our immediate needs and thinking generationally so that we are building churches for today whilst trying to look into the future,” Darryl says.

Christchurch Presbytery has a strategic framework for parishes to develop a mission plan to help them make those decisions about their future.

While every one of their parishes will eventually need to go through this process, around 10 parishes are currently working through a mission planning process which looks at both current and future ministry and takes into account mission questions such as, “What does it mean to be church?” and “Who is God calling us to in Christ?”

While it is early days, currently two out of nine parishes that lost buildings are planning to rebuild. Until they decide on their futures, the insurance money churches damaged by the quakes received remains in the bank gaining interest.

Darryl says there is sadness when church buildings have to close, but in Christchurch there have been positives as well.

“I can think of about six congregations who have said there are things about meeting in the hall that they enjoy – like fellowship

While acknowledging the pain of not being able to worship in their church building anymore, Christchurch Presbytery is encouraging parishes to think about what it means to be a church in the 21st century.

and building relationships. There is grief over losing a building but for many of our parishes it has been a positive experience to meet in a hall or meet somewhere else.”

Darryl says Christchurch parishes are remembering that the building is there to serve but it is the people who make a church.

Responding to the need for more information and support, the Assembly Executive Secretary, Martin Baker says that the need to comply with increasingly strict building safety requirements is part of a more demanding range of legislative requirements.

“I am very concerned that whole rafts of increasingly exacting compliance demands are placing the kind of pressure on congregations that could undermine the energy and resources they would otherwise commit to being the outward and mission focused Church that God calls us to be. The impact these requirements are going to make, especially on smaller congregations, is particularly concerning,” Martin says.

CPT's Kos van Lier is working with the Church's Finance Manager, Brendan Sweeney, and Assembly Executive Secretary to plan a series of workshops and to develop resources that will help support presbyteries and congregations in meeting these challenges. These resources will not only focus on matters of immediate concern to the CPT - such as property approvals, the role of presbytery in relation to property and quake prone buildings, and the Presbyterian Investment Fund – they will also assist congregations to comply with other legislative requirements.



From left to right: Liesel Mitchell, the Rev Dr Sarah Mitchell, Zac Mitchell-Beatson (Sarah and Rod's grandson) and the Rev Dr Rod Mitchell with the Star of Hope quilt, made for Sarah by the women of Knox Church, Dunedin. Photo by Ian Thomson.

Secret quilt becomes Star of Hope

The story behind a quilt is just as important as the final product, and this is very much the case for a quilt made by the women of Knox Presbyterian Church in Dunedin to mark the retirement of their minister.

The quilt, Star of Hope – 'tis our Song, along with an accompanying narrative and photographs were presented to the Rev Dr Sarah Marshall on 10 February 2013, following her final sermon as minister at Knox.

Several experienced quilters coordinated a team of around 90 women – dubbed the “naughty angels” because of the subterfuge required to keep the project secret from Sarah – to make the quilt, which measures almost 8m².

Janet Sim Elder, Liz Mitchell, Alison Taite, Glyn Smith and Suzanne Bishop (or “organsing angels” as they became known) coordinated the project, and carefully orchestrated the reveal to ensure the quilt was a big surprise for Sarah.

After her last sermon a special gathering was held to mark Sarah's retirement, and while Sarah was downstairs in the sanctuary, the quilt – which was hung on a rod – was carefully draped over the side of the upstairs gallery, and swung to the floor for all to see.

The whole congregation was in on the big reveal, as notices had been secretly handed out as people entered church that morning

The idea for the quilt came about after conversations among some of the women in the congregation. Planning started in July 2012.

asking everyone to join in song – on cue – with the hymn from which the quilt gets its name: Hope is our Song.

Sarah was overwhelmed by the gift, and appreciated the inclusion of the narrative which gave behind-the-scenes glimpses into the quilt's development.

“I've got this wonderful quilt and so much more,” she told Janet.

Janet said that the process of making the quilt brought the Knox women together, and that they came to know and appreciate each other in new ways.

“Our small team's lives are intertwined in the narrative, as we opened ourselves to each other in new ways. The project was a huge leap of faith, but with commitment and wonderful cooperation from so many, we have all made something of lasting value for our beloved Sarah (and Rod) as they conclude their ministry among us.”

The idea for the quilt came about after conversations among some of the women in the congregation. Planning started in July 2012.

“Quilts bring comfort and tranquillity, whether on a bed or a wall. A quilt is a work of art that brings colour into our lives. As it covers our bodies in sleep at the end of a day, it brings warmth, comfort, and memories of the hands which have stitched it,” Janet says.

Projects like this can take years for a single quilter to complete, so the fact that the main part of the quilt was finished in just eight weeks was a real miracle, Janet says, especially given only a few women in the group had ever quilted before.

The process of cutting out the pieces of fabric required for the quilt took around four weeks before any sewing had even begun.

Once sewing started, some sewed, others ironed, cut, unpicked and provided nourishment for the teams of women who turned up at the weekly sewing sessions.

The project involved sewing together 5,344 individual pieces of fabric which were carefully cut into rectangles, diamonds, and squares and other shapes. These pieces were then sewn into 275 blocks representing different parts of the design, and then all 275 were joined together in a large square to form the quilt top.

The group opted to outsource the remaining stitch work (which in this case was done by machine) and involved joining together the top, inner padding and back of the quilt using a series of intricate stitching patterns.

The quilt acknowledges the involvement of the many people who were involved with the project, with contributors' names included on the underside of the quilt.

Janet and Liz note that at times it felt as though they were running a sweat shop because of all the work and people involved in the project.

“People wanted to be involved. They wanted to do their best, and each stitch was sewn with care, love, precision and commitment,” Liz says.

Jose Reader [Spanz](#)



A professional librarian for 33 years, she has worked in many different areas of the University of Otago library, including three years as science librarian

Anne Jackman with the St Paul's Trinity Pacific Baptism Register from Archives and a 15th century Book of Hours from Hewitson.

Librarian renewed by directorship of the Knox Information and Research Centre

In January 2013 Presbyterian Archives and Hewitson Library were merged into the new Knox Information and Research Centre (KIRC), at Knox College, Dunedin.

Anne Jackman, recently appointed KIRC director, is looking forward to promoting the range of services the new centre will offer.

Anne anticipates that her new role will be both different and similar to her previous role at the Hocken Collections, University of Otago, in Dunedin, where she was reference librarian for 12 years.

"Years back I studied at the Hocken for my Otago history dissertation and I really loved the place and the experience. I felt very fortunate when I got the position there, which was essentially managing the publications collections. Over the years it's been fascinating to be involved with so many people's research."

The Hocken's archival collection places an emphasis on the Otago and Southland regions of New Zealand. Anne says she expects the range of customers at the Hocken will be similar to those that utilise Hewitson, and Presbyterian Archives in particular.

"Everyone from students to academics, members of the public to genealogists, and researchers from the other side of the world - it's a whole range of levels of research and knowledge and experience that you deal with."

Anne also expects Hewitson Library to be a little bit of a change for her regarding who uses it, because it is mostly utilised by theology students and the students and staff of the Knox Centre of Ministry and Leadership.

"I understand that the wider Church isn't as aware of the Hewitson collection as they are of Presbyterian Archives. Only a percentage of Hewitson is findable through the catalogue and I think that's probably one of the things that we will have to look at. Once the collection becomes more visible it will encourage researchers to come to it."

Use of Hewitson has declined, Anne says, since theology department students now work mainly through the University library.

"I hope that is something we can turn around; no doubt Hewitson has much that students are not yet aware of that would help them in their studies."

Born in Dunedin, Anne has spent most of her life in the city. A professional librarian for 33 years, she has worked in many different areas of the University of Otago library, including three years as science librarian. She has also worked in public and private libraries in Invercargill and Melbourne, where she ran a library for mental health practitioners.

She says that at every library she has worked, the first task is "learning the language, learning the context before content".

"You learn to use the language people are using, you learn to understand the context people are working in - that's the way that you access the records and provide the support people need. I will be learning the Presbyterian language and I am really looking forward to the challenge."

Anne says she is excited to be focusing on helping churches and ministries and parishioners.

"It will be interesting, really very interesting. I expect it to be a steep curve learning the structure of the Presbyterian Church; I'm Anglican so it's quite different. But as we always say in libraries, 'it's not what you know but knowing where to find it'. That's really what it's all about. That's why most librarians are dreadful at the quiz games!"

Anne has a strong commitment to the arts and has run a well-known Dunedin gallery, Quadrant, with her partner jeweller and sculptor, David Mcleod, for the past six years.

She has a family connection to the Presbyterian Church through her late Aunt, Helen Murray (Jackman), who was a Deaconess, and both a teacher and chaplain at many Presbyterian schools including Scots and Queen Margaret Colleges, Wellington, and Columba College, Dunedin. Helen was also a former Principal of Turakina Maori Girls' College in Marton.

Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

End of an era for Faith Based Unit

The Faith Based Unit at Rimutaka Prison has changed many lives and its closure in December 2012 brought sadness to both those who established it and those who participated in its programmes.

Unit Seven, as the Faith Based Unit is known, was the only one in the country and was one of Prison Fellowship New Zealand's highest profile programmes.

It was established nine years ago in partnership with the Department of Corrections to reduce the risk of re-offending, and to provide prisoners with Christian support leading up to and following their release.

Corrections closed the 60-bed unit because an evaluation it conducted in 2010 indicated that the programme did not have a significant impact upon reducing re-offending, but Kim Workman, former Prison Fellowship national director who established the unit, disagrees.

Kim believes the Unit was a success and changed many lives because it encouraged and showed inmates how to make connections with people "on the outside".

"It was about developing a support network for them; they were mentored for up to eight months before they left the prison and preparation was often made through churches to support the prisoners when they were released."

Prison Fellowship's current national director, Robin Gunston, is also unhappy about the closure. He says the Unit has reduced offending and has helped more than 500 men turnaround their lives.

"We have been following many of the men who've been through the unit and many of them are now living crime-free, serving their families, churches and communities."

One of those who knows the value of the Unit, is 25-year-old Stephen Glover, who now attends Knox Presbyterian Church in Lower Hutt. While in prison serving a sentence for robbery, he decided to "take a chance" and spend 12 months at the Faith Based Unit. He says it changed his life.



Frank Eijgenraam was a counsellor at the recently closed Faith Based Unit at Rimutaka Prison.

"Everyone was just so generous. I had no idea what it was about. It just gave me faith in life and in people."

Stephen has just graduated from a forestry course - an achievement he says he wouldn't have been able to do without God; he learnt to trust in God at the Faith Based Unit.

Another person who went through the unit and wanted to be known only as Mr X, is now self-employed and a board member of an Anglican church.

Mr X has been out of jail for about three years and like Stephen, says he wouldn't be where he is today if he hadn't been through the programme.

"One morning I prayed to God and told him that I had had enough. The next morning I was transferred out of the Hawke's Bay prison to the Rimutaka Faith Based Unit."

At the Unit, Mr X, who didn't really believe in God, got involved in prayer groups and Bible studies. The stories in the Bible taught him that it wasn't too late to turn his life around.

They gave him hope and faith in God. He says today, "I've never felt better in my life".

Counsellor Frank Eijgenraam worked with men at the Faith Based Unit for seven years and is someone who saw prisoners change to become better people.

"It was the safest prison Unit in the country. It had been drug free for the last three years, which is unheard of in a prison. I've seen many who went through the Unit, doing well in society," he says.

Frank believes that punishing prisoners does not work but rehabilitation is the key to turning them around

Frank believes that punishing prisoners does not work but rehabilitation is the key to turning them around. Treating prisoners with dignity and respect, like they did at the Unit, is very important, he says.

Frank is sad the Unit has closed but he is optimistic about the future.

"The good thing is that Corrections has asked Prison Fellowship to develop reintegration programmes for prisoners throughout the country, not just at Rimutaka."

One of these programmes is called Target Communities, which is currently being piloted in Rimutaka, Arohata and Spring Hill Prisons.

Stephen Cunningham, director of Offender Employment and Reintegration at Corrections, says Target Communities aims to assist eligible prisoners to reintegrate into the Greater Wellington and Auckland Council regions on their release.

"The Faith Based Unit was available to eligible male prisoners in just one prison, while the programmes which replace the Unit are available to suitable male and female prisoners in a number of our prisons."

Christine Gounder [Spanz](#)

New Master for Knox College

Overwhelmed to be being invited into a remarkable tradition is how the Rev Dr Selwyn Yeoman describes his appointment as Master of Knox College, Dunedin.

Selwyn, who was inducted as Master on 21 February 2013, takes up his role during a period of significant change at the residential college.

In the past year Knox's governing council was replaced by a Church appointed commission; the former Master retired; rules were updated to improve the college experience for students; and earthquake strengthening of the century old college required extensive redevelopment of Knox and Salmond during the Christmas and New Year break. The \$12 million project, which includes 63 new rooms at Knox and Salmond, was completed in mid-February, well in time for the returning students.

Selwyn says the quality and speed of the redevelopment was impressive; just two days after completion of earthquake strengthening, Knox staff were busy welcoming some of the 262 students.

With building work completed, Selwyn says he can focus on plans to strengthen other aspects of Knox.

He hopes to develop the College's tutorial system over the next two years.

"All colleges run tutorials, it's one of the reasons universities encourage first year students into a college, because they get better support. We will look at ways to make our tutorial system more robust."

He will also introduce changes to worship.

"High ritual is how the College's worship has developed, and while there is a beauty about high liturgy, on its own I don't think it's adequate for the kind of cultural place that most of our students are in. We will talk to the students about what they want, and we will introduce some new things."

Selwyn hopes that one of the characteristics of the College will be a regular commitment from all students to some form of community service, something he has always encouraged young people to be involved in during his years in ministry.

Selwyn trained at the Theological Hall and in 1979 went to the rural parish of Forest Hill in Southland. He found it a challenge after university life in Auckland and Otago. "It was a predominantly mono-cultural and conservative area," he says.

In late 1984 he went to Mosgiel, a large and vibrant church, to become part of a team ministry.

"That was a stunningly different experience because at that stage Mosgiel was a growing church, a sort of centre of charismatic renewal. The 20 years that I was in Mosgiel were creative, fruitful years for me. I started as the associate minister and after three years the senior minister resigned to become a Catholic. That was a very constructive period because I had to lead people through a period of significant change and unexpected surprises."

Mosgiel placed a strong emphasis on its youth.

"I had some hugely satisfying years leading the youth ministry. Many of the parents encouraged me in this despite it being something that senior ministers were often not associated with.

"I wonder whether the church traditionally has been infected by certain notions of professional advancement and status so that



The Rev Dr Selwyn Yeoman outside Knox College, Dunedin.

children and youth are somewhere down the bottom, an area to work your way out of."

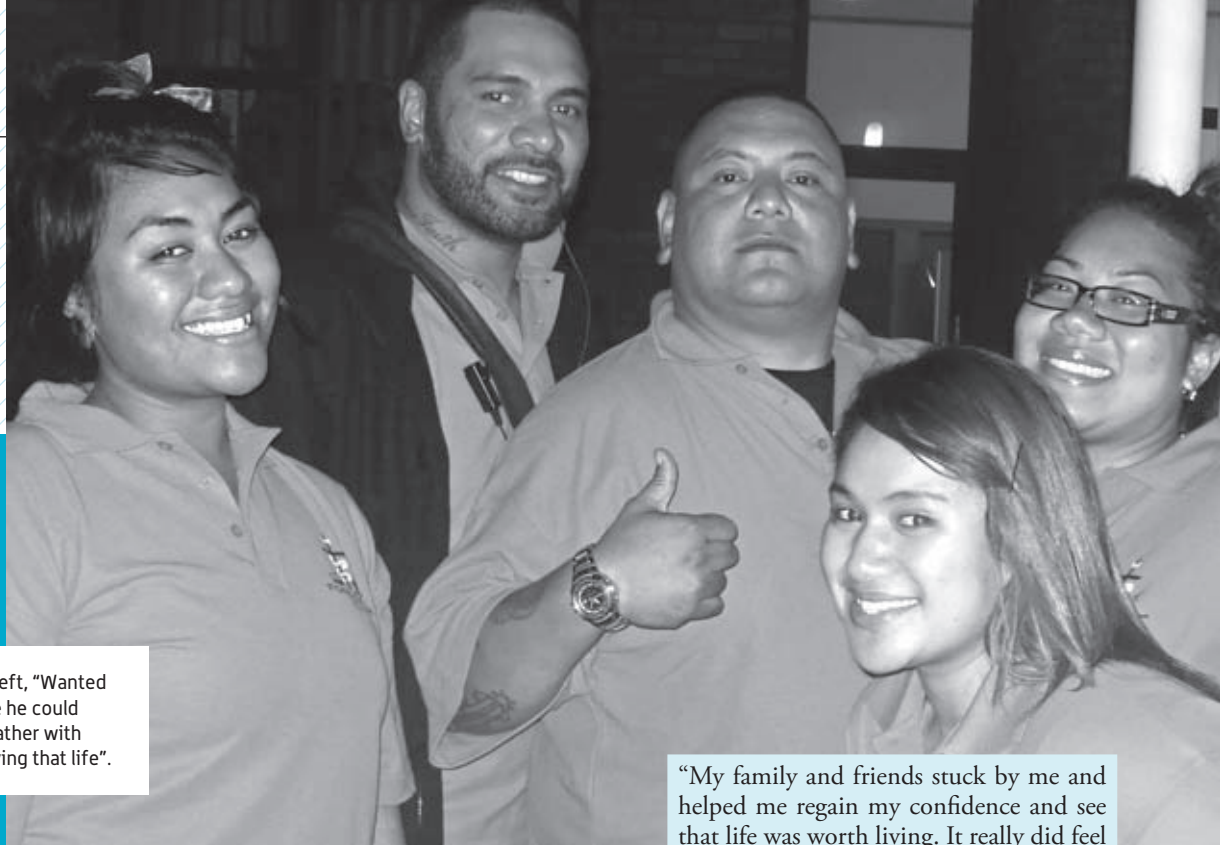
The importance of obtaining a good education is something that has been passed down in Selwyn and his wife Natalie's families; four generations studied at Otago.

He and Natalie, his wife of 38 years and a teacher, have five adult children; all are graduates of the University of Otago. Their oldest, Jude, has a physical education degree and works for the Police; Hannah completed a teaching degree, Emerson has a philosophy and politics degree and recently handed in his thesis for a Master of Planning, Ollie has a degree in geography and post-graduate diplomas in outdoor education and teaching, and Monica has a degree in politics.

Selwyn says that Natalie encouraged him to take on the role of Master to further his long term interest in student ministry. Together they look forward to being involved in the life of the college.

"My interests in conservation and environmentalism should bring a certain quality to the way that I engage here. Natalie is a very creative musician and will look at how she can be involved musically. We have a tremendous commitment to one another, to the staff, and to the students to make this work - and to have fun doing so. We have been overwhelmed by the commitment of the staff to make the 'new' Knox as wonderful as the old."

Angela Singer [Spanz](#)



Meauli Seuala, third from left, "Wanted to work with young people he could save from a life of crime rather with those who were already living that life".

"My family and friends stuck by me and helped me regain my confidence and see that life was worth living. It really did feel like it was a second chance."

Scholarship enables youth ministry

"I am a survivor," says Meauli Seuala, an elder of Tamaki Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church who has been awarded a Wilberforce Leadership Scholarship.

The scholarship has meant Meauli has been able to buy not only a laptop and books, but has also enabled him to buy petrol so that he can drive to see his clients and provided money to take them out for meals.

Meauli is studying for a Diploma in Social Services at Target Education in Auckland, and knows how many of his social welfare clients feel because he's been there too; in his early 20s he tried to commit suicide.

"I am one of those chaps who could have gone the other way and not been alive right now, or be in jail. It was the community of the church that kept me on the straight and narrow."

He was encouraged to apply for the scholarship by the Revs Gary Mauga and Mark Johnston of the Tamaki Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church in Glen Innes after they had heard about his social work in the Samoan community in Manukau.

While Meauli is studying and doing voluntary work, he's living on a student allowance. His wife Margaret earns the main income for their family of five children working as a support teacher at a local high school.

Three times a year the whole family runs the Youthpride holiday programme in Glen Innes. This January 150 youngsters took part in the programme, which provides lunch and a range of activities.

"A lot of the young people come from rough homes with alcohol and drug abuse. They have personal issues from having been verbally abused and told they are not going to amount to anything – by their families, their peers and their communities. We sit them down, talk to them and see where they are at and how we can help them," Meauli says.

Meauli and Margaret also take in 15 to 18 year olds estranged from their families.

They are proud of their record of reconciliation. "Every person has gone back to their family. Most are now working hard and have families of their own. They say, 'If it wasn't for you guys I wouldn't have what I've got now'," Meauli says. He found that when he got married, 17 years ago, the allure of alcohol dropped away.

Some of his clients mirror his own history. He tried to take his own life, stabbing himself three times with a kitchen knife after a relationship breakup. He had been too ashamed to go back to his family because they had always advised him against the relationship in the first place.

He has used that second chance to help others. "It isn't a coincidence that I am talking to people who are going through what I went through – who have given up on life or whose families have forsaken them. I became a magnet for those who were down and out, trying to help them out. I can sit there and say, 'I know exactly what you are going through. I have been in that situation and this is what I think'."

Meauli, who speaks fluent Samoan although he was born in New Zealand, left school at 18, worked in a sports shop and became a youth leader at church.

"I was the youngest elder in our church. It was a great encouragement having the parish council and ministers offer eldership."

He has worked for CYFS monitoring children, as a "support parent" for the local primary school, as a secondary school teacher aide and with the youth services programme MYND.

He decided he wanted to work with young people he could save from a life of crime rather with those who were already living that life. "I wanted to be there before they fell off the cliff."

Several years ago he was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. "So I have a lot of yukky things I'm experienced in and I'm thankful I have experienced them because I am able to help others.

"I've always wanted to be ordained, but I feel God has already set a ministry for me helping those outside the church – bringing the community to church and the church to the community."

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

New director for Presbyterian Church Schools office

"You know by their wriggling," says the Rev Caleb Hardie on how to tell whether students are engaged – as he heads back to the schools sector, having spent the past four years as the minister at Epsom Presbyterian Church in Auckland.

In his new role as director of the Presbyterian Church Schools office, Caleb will be responsible for strengthening links between schools and the Church, and for providing encouragement to school chaplains, as well as developing and co-ordinating resources that can be utilised by the country's 15 Presbyterian schools.

"There's something very edgy and real about being in a school environment. We get a little lazy with our language in church. It's very in-house – a group of people who have agreed to talk about things in a particular way.

"In schools, people are coming in with varying degrees of enthusiasm, or even angst, and you can see quickly with young people whether you've got them engaged; you know by their wriggling. It keeps your communication skills at a high level."

Caleb was St Kentigern College's chaplain before becoming minister at Epsom and says he loved being a school chaplain.

"It is an amazing opportunity to connect with a very large group of people – the pupils and their families. For a high percentage it's their only point of contact with the church. In terms of people being impacted in the Presbyterian schools, it's probably about 15,000 people.

"You build a knowledge base among the students - and that goes home. I remember at St Kentigern hearing from parents about what was talked about at the dinner table. So I think it is a wonderful missional opportunity. But chaplains have a huge job. They've all got a busy and full creative workload."

As well as supporting chaplains he wants to get more connection between the schools –

"to take the best of what is happening and make that available to the others".

Helping schools retain their special Presbyterian character is one of his challenges.

"The catchphrase is 'values education' and it occurs across the country. There has to be more to it in our schools - so that students walk out with a knowledge of our Presbyterian heritage and theology.

"If that is communicated well it is fantastic stuff for young people, and their families, in what is now a busy world – to have moments of reflection, to consider their place in the world and to live not just for themselves, but others."

Caleb says his new role brings together all his background and experience. He is the son of two Presbyterian ministers – the late Rev Brian Hardie and the Rev Sylvia Miller Hardie – and felt called to the ministry very early. "It's in my blood and bones."

With Bible College training, a Bachelor of Education from the University of Otago, ordination and teacher training under his belt he spent a couple of years at St Kentigern. "I jumped at it." His brother Reuben, previously associate minister at Somervell Presbyterian Church, took over when he moved on to Epsom.

He has transformed Epsom – doubling the congregation, restoring the pipe organ and opening a café in the sanctuary.

He trained as a barista when he and Reuben opened The Daily Grind café at the General Assembly in Wellington in 2002.

"The thing about having the coffee machine is that people stay. We spend time engaging with each other – rather than people just disappearing out the door."

Caleb and his wife Deborah, who have four children ranging from age 10 to five, married when he was 19 and she was 18.

"We had to get our parents' permission, just like getting permission for a school trip – only longer."



The Rev Caleb Hardie, new director for Presbyterian Church Schools office.

Last year was a tough one for the family as Caleb's father died, aged 58, and Caleb's own heart valve failed, leaving him unable to play contact sports – though he still hunts and plays tennis and touch rugby.

"It was a hell of a year, but it was wonderful in terms of what you discover about yourself and the people around you who care for you.

"I think life is to be lived and enjoyed, and I enjoy that sense in which gospel living is something that is real. It should not be something we put on when we walk into church. God is in the midst of the ordinary things and the great things, and the tough times."

Jane Tolerton **Spanz**

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Workshops aim to minimise risk

While a minister falling short of ethical standards is not common, even rare falls have devastating effects on those involved, which is why the Presbyterian Church is hosting a series of Ethics in Ministry workshops in 2013.

According to Jane Zintl, the lawyer and experienced youth worker who runs the seminars, the reality is that problems often start with something little, and then gradually develop into something that leaders are neither trained nor prepared for.

The Rev Martin Stewart, who attended one of the 2012 seminars agrees, saying, “While I hope that I’m never involved in starting something that ends up in a messy legal challenge, the reality is that these things happen. But too often, the ministers who get caught up in these situations are blindsided – they never see it coming.

“Attending the workshop has given me a new awareness of the issues we face, and I now have one more layer of knowledge that can help me minimise my role in putting myself and the church at risk,” Martin says.

The four-hour workshop draws heavily on case studies that give examples of how things can go wrong, and focuses on child protection and the Presbyterian code of ethics, says Jane who has been running Ethics in Ministry workshops for several years.

“While most people understand things like transparency and confidentiality, the course is a good refresher for ministers, and provides an opportunity for self-awareness and self-reflection.

“We can at times end up in very tricky situations. In real time we don’t always have the opportunity to sit down and consider how to respond, so the more equipped we are, the better off we, and those in our care, will be.”

She says that the seminars challenge the “I-know-that” attitude to ethical boundaries, with a series of scenarios loosely based on real-life situations that ask church leaders to examine how they would respond.

Sound simple? Consider this: A grandfather brings his grandchildren to church. One of the children discloses to a youth leader that his father hits him. Both the father

and grandfather are respected members of the church. How would you respond if you were the youth leader? What if the accusation is false? What if it is true?

Jane uses scenarios like this one throughout the workshop to get people thinking and so that leaders can critically examine their approach and how they might react in situations like this.

Assembly Executive Secretary the Rev Martin Baker delivers the first 20 minutes of the workshop, in which he places the ethical challenges faced by ministers and elders in context.

In his introduction to the seminar he affirms the critical role leaders play in the life, vitality and mission of the church.

“Our leaders work within a complex of relationships. They make decisions every day which impact on the lives of others. They do a great job and almost all their decisions convey a conviction and a faith which encourages and supports Christian mission and witness.”

Unfortunately, though, he says this isn’t always the case. Although the number of misconduct cases the Church sees each year is small, they are extremely damaging to those involved, and even one such case is evidence that we could do better.

“Sometimes these ethical failures reflect a lack of access to resources or information, a naivety about rules or laws or the nature

of the media, or occasionally reflect a minister’s own sense of loneliness.

“The workshop is really aimed at helping ministers and other church leaders in the identification and management of the risks they will face in the exercise of their ministry. And one of the big messages is trying to avoid making difficult decisions in isolation.”

The Rev Hamish Galloway, senior minister at Hope Presbyterian said the course he attended in Ashburton in November was excellent.

“We were provided with good take home resources helpful in equipping churches to up-skill in this area, and it was an excellent opportunity to examine really important issues in the exercise of ministry and the running of a church.”

A large number of people have attended the 2012 risk management workshops, including interns at Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, and 50 or so people at a session in Invercargill. Several more courses are planned for 2013 including New Plymouth, Tauranga, Hamilton, Christchurch and other centres.

The workshops are compulsory for all ministers wishing to maintain their Certificate of Good Standing, and further details about the workshop locations and dates are available from Assembly Office.

Jose Reader [Spanz](#)



Lawyer and experienced youth worker, Jane Zintl, who runs the Church’s Ethics in Ministry workshops.

Presbyterian Support champions church relationships

For churches, working together with Presbyterian Support became easier recently with the appointment of seven regional champions dedicated to fostering relationships between Support and local parishes.

The champions were appointed as part of the PresCare initiative, a partnership between the Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Support and Presbyterian schools.

“PresCare is essentially about providing opportunities for the organisations to work together in meaningful ways to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and their families,” says Gillian Bremner, Presbyterian Support Otago chief executive and PresCare project sponsor.

Since the project’s inception in late 2010, several joint initiatives have come to fruition including the Reflections for Lent booklets, and a national children’s art competition for Family Works families, church schools and parishes. Gillian believes it is now timely to build on links at local levels.

The regional champions, who are all in existing roles within Presbyterian Support, were born out of a belief that “the national PresCare partnership is only as good as the activity at regional and local levels,” she says.

Why Now?

Established around 125 years ago, Presbyterian Support has long been the social service arm of the Church, but there is an increasing awareness among the Church and Support that more can be achieved together than alone, says Gillian.

“It would appear that there is a sea change in missional thinking in the Church and an increased willingness to engage with communities. The time is coming when many more parishes will wish to be actively involved in mission to, and with, their local communities, and no longer in effect delegate the responsibility to serve the lonely, the poor and the vulnerable to Presbyterian Support.”

Presbyterian Support is a well respected social services provider, with around \$159 million spent on service delivery annually across all seven regions, and just under 5,000 employees nationwide, including a range of clinical professionals like social workers. Presbyterian Support is well positioned to provide services in the clinical space, but there is huge opportunity to work much more closely with local parishes to support and enable community mission, Gillian says.

“It’s about working with parishes, in their own space, in their own time, and finding where the fertile ground is. We need to walk at the right pace that will work for both of us.”

Presbyterian Support and parish relations are at varying stages of development in different parts of the country, and enhancing these connections is not only important for meeting community needs, but also appropriate because of the shared history between the Church and Support Gillian believes.

“We share a name. We share a common humanity in the image of God. We have the heart for people and shared vision for a fair, just and caring society. That’s the common ground.

“As Aristotle put it, ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’. Instead of beaver away independently in our corners, there is more that we can achieve together.”

Being more effective in how we deploy resources to meet community need is important now, and will continue to be in the future, says Peter Wards who is regional champion and chief executive of Presbyterian Support Southland.

“We’re living in hard economic times where the community needs help more than ever before. Having to do more with less is going to be the order of the day for the next five to 10 years.”

What’s going on in the regions?

Across the country, Presbyterian Support draws on local churches for volunteers, and parishes and individuals offer financial support for various Presbyterian Support initiatives.

In South Canterbury, regional champion Merle Maddren confirms that local parishioners “are loyal volunteers” at the region’s aged care facilities and Family Works. Their goodwill shop also relies heavily on volunteers from local parishes.

And in the Upper South Island Anna Mowat says, “We know that when we have strong church partnerships, it benefits the church, Presbyterian Support and the community.”

One case in point, she says, is the Family Works community family worker that is based out of St Stephen’s Presbyterian Church in Bryndwr, Christchurch.

One of Upper South Island’s major aims is to improve social inclusion so that people feel, and are, well connected in their own communities, says Anna, and co-locating with St Stephen’s is a great fit for both Support and the parish, which has a strong focus on community mission.

And in the East Coast, Trusts manager, Linda Kaye, who is the champion for her region, says they’re in the process of rebuilding relationships with parishes.

“We’ve unintentionally drifted apart a little bit, and now we’re reaching out to our parishes again.”

PresCare, she says, has partially been responsible for re-sparking connections with parishes, she says.

For the last couple of years Support East Coast has had a former presbytery moderator as parish liaison coordinator (a volunteer role), which has been helpful in building connections with parishes. In 2013, Support East Coast has plans to approach presbytery to establish bi-annual meetings between Support representatives and parishes.

Linda is hopeful that the meetings will help build stronger relationships between the two organisations.

“We hope the meetings will better enable cooperation because we’ll have better visibility of each others’ activities, and they will also provide a platform for future conversations about where we can work together.”



Food is prepared by Presbyterian Support Otago staff and volunteers. Presbyterian Support Otago continues to have strong links with local parishes.

While Presbyterian Support Southland is in the early stages of its programme to reconnect with parishes, regional champion Peter Wards is hopeful for the future.

Meetings between parish representatives and Support Southland in late 2012, identified some potential areas where the two organisations could work more closely together: rural isolation and transport, affordable and appropriate housing for older people and loneliness of older people were some of the areas discussed. The group is re-convening in early 2013, and will hear presentations from those with ideas about where the two groups might be able to work together. It's early days yet, Peter says, but the conversations are encouraging.

Regular meetings between parishes and Presbyterian Support have been a part of Support Otago's programme for many years, and as a result linkages between parishes and Presbyterian Support in the region are among the strongest in the country.

"We have maintained Support Sundays and we have a commitment to speak in every Presbyterian and Union parish in Otago each year, and our field officers visit donors and supporters," says Lisa Wells, Support's Otago regional champion.

"Increasingly our welfare and social work is carried out in a community development framework and churches are ideal partners. They are assets and strengths within their communities."

Support Otago also expects to appoint a community mission facilitator in 2013, who will provide a designated point of contact for community mission, and the joint appointment of an intern for ministry at a North Otago parish will further enhance connections between parishes and Presbyterian Support Otago, Lisa says.

Support Northern already has a specific role dedicated solely to fostering links with parishes, and Anne Overton fills this. She is also the Prescare champion for the region and has a coordination role for national PresCare activity.

"I go and find out from churches what are they're up to. I support them to discern what God is up to in their neighbourhood, so that they can start to look at their community through a different lens.

It's challenging but also quite exciting. They want to connect, but often don't know how."

Presbyterian Support Northern provides practical support for parishes wanting to engage in community mission. As well as visiting with parish leaders, she provides resources for enabling community mission and runs workshops.

In the Northern region, there are many examples of parishes and Support working together to support the marginalised, Anne says.

She tells the story of a Pacific Island church in west Auckland, who in 2012, instead of giving Christmas presents to their Sunday School children, gave an equivalent amount in cash to Family Works to buy gifts for underprivileged children. The pre-school children were fully involved in the decision, says Anne, who then gave the pre-schoolers names so they could pray for the underprivileged children to whom the gifts were given.

Another parish in the Northern region prepared boxes filled with food and gifts for Family Works families at Christmas time and this has been replicated in Dunedin, and other parts of the country.

There are many similar examples of pockets of good work between parishes and Presbyterian Support around the country, but one thing that is consistent across the regions is the strongly held belief that more could be done if churches and Support worked together more closely.

What does the future hold?

Relationships between Presbyterian Support and parishes will look different in different places, says Gillian, as community outreach responds to the needs in that particular community.

But overall, Gillian is hopeful that closer relations between local churches and Presbyterian Support will make a real difference in local communities, and in the lives of those living there.

"If PresCare is delivering on its goals, there will be a vibrant and diverse outworking of our Christian activity – be it via the parish or Presbyterian Support working closely with parishes.

"Presbyterian Support expertise will be called upon as needed, and referrals to us made as needed. There will be on-going conversations about how we can work best together. We will make the best of our collective resources to achieve the broader vision – improving the wellbeing of children, young people and their families."

Jose Reader Spanz



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THEOLOGYMATTERS

I've long been fascinated by the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament. Remember the 1960s folk song by the Byrds, Turn, turn, turn? It's based on Ecclesiastes 3.

But there's much more to Ecclesiastes than a folk song. Written around 320 BC, it is an extended poetic reflection on the subject of wisdom. Not the abstract wisdom of Greek philosophy which contemplates the good over a glass of Chardonnay and classical music, but rather earthy Hebrew wisdom that is best accompanied by a glass of scotch and dose of rhythm and blues. Check out this paraphrased selection of observations: "I saw all the deeds under the sun," says the teacher, "and all is vanity and chasing after wind. All things are wearisome. There is nothing new under the sun. In much wisdom is much vexation; those who increase knowledge, increase sorrow."

One's first reaction to this rather gloomy outlook on life is to conclude that the author must have been either a born pessimist or suffering from depression, or both, and then to protest: What about human progress, the benefits of which we enjoy daily – whether it be in terms of political freedom, economic prosperity, the accumulation of knowledge, or developments in science and technology, all resulting in the alleviation of suffering, longer life spans and more comfortable life styles? Is all this to be regarded as vanity, a mere chasing after wind? Surely not!


That is a natural response. But it misses the point that the teacher is trying to make. No stranger himself to wealth, education, pleasure, and the fruits of human labour, he readily acknowledges human progress on a material level. But on another level – the level of human nature and patterns of behaviour – things do not change. Looking around, he notices that the court of human affairs is dominated by myriad forms of oppression, injustice and outright evil. Murder, greed, envy, domination, bitterness – these things remain constant from one generation to the next. Moreover, the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same – as one dies, so dies the other. Truly, at the heart of human existence, there is nothing new under the sun and, given this fundamental truth, so much to which we devote our lives is mere vanity, a chasing after wind.



The effect of the teacher's musings is to burst the bubble of human pretension, as if to say, "Don't be seduced into thinking that you're more enlightened and progressive than you really are. Look around. Think about what you see daily in the news. Do you see the poverty, violence, misery and level of addiction in your community and in the world at large? Admit it, beneath the surface of human life is a spiritual dislocation and a profound foolishness".

Hard words for each generation to hear, yet words worth hearing. Hebrew realism as opposed to Greek idealism. You see, the teacher isn't concerned with motivating the reader to strive for an ideal. He's concerned with breaking the reader's pride and arrogance so that a new foundation for living might be laid – a foundation of grace, in which life is received as a gift from God, and lived accordingly. To be sure, the theme of grace is not as fully developed as that which we see elsewhere in Scripture, and in the New Testament in particular, but it is there. Ancient wisdom that the modern ear still needs to hear. As George Bernanos puts it, "In order to be prepared to hope in what does not deceive, we must first lose hope in everything that deceives." That's the aim of Ecclesiastes. Check it out.

– by *Graham Redding, Principal of Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership*




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Edith Kubwimana and her daughters, Noella and Enatha.

From Rwandan refugee to church elder

From late-1990 to late-1993, Rwanda in central Africa was engulfed in a civil war between the government of President Juvénal Habyarimana and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front.

The assassination of Habyarimana in April 1994 proved to be the catalyst for the Rwandan Genocide during which approximately 800,000 people out of Rwanda's total population of 8 million, died between April and June.

In 1994, Edith Kubwimana, her husband Immanuel and their baby daughter were helped by missionaries from a German Presbyterian church to flee from Rwanda to Kenya. Nineteen years later, Edith shares the remarkable journey that she has taken from Rwandan refugee to elder of St Columba Presbyterian Church in Lower Hutt, Wellington.

Edith Kubwimana has attended a Presbyterian church all her life. The church has been one of the few constants in her life of challenge and change.

"In Rwanda my whole family attended the Presbyterian church where my father was an elder. From a very young age I and my nine brothers and sisters attended Sunday School. My uncle and aunt were pastors of a Presbyterian church. The church was such a big part of our lives. Even when I was a refugee in Kenya I went to a Presbyterian church."

In 1994, at the time of the Rwandan Genocide, Edith was a teacher, had recently given birth to her first daughter, Enatha, and was anxiously waiting to hear if she and her husband Immanuel would be allowed to go to Kenya where they were to both study at Daystar University in Nairobi.

"The German Presbyterian church missionaries who were to sponsor my husband were trying to contact us to find out if he was still alive. Fortunately they found us; they helped us leave for Kenya on 15 December 1994."

For a year they both studied at university – Immanuel for a Bachelor degree in accounting and Edith for a Bachelor degree in community development. Edith gave birth to a second daughter, Noella, and took a break from study.

"I returned alone to Rwanda to visit my people and to get my new passport as the change in government meant our old Rwandan passports were useless. My parents and my parents-in-law told me to tell Immanuel never to return to Rwanda because things were not good, especially for men. When I returned to Kenya I tried to get Immanuel to understand the seriousness of his mum and his dad's warning, but other people convinced him to go back to Rwanda to get his passport."

Immanuel went to Rwanda in late 1996, where he was jailed, unjustly accused of being involved in the genocide. He died in jail one year later.

"I was left alone with two babies under four. Even today in Rwanda they can still point at people and say that this person

did this and this during the genocide and just put them in the jail."

"While Immanuel was in the Rwandan jail things in Kenya started to get bad. They were finding ways to make foreign people go back to their own countries or putting them in jail. Daystar University decided to take all its foreign students inside the campus to live to protect us. We stayed there for a month and during that time I was told Immanuel had died. I comforted the people who told me, and later I cried in private."

"I did not know what would happen to me or my babies. I was allowed four years at the university through my sponsor but I could not finish my studies in that time, it was too much caring for my babies and my husband being in jail then dead. The German Presbyterians helped me to get sponsorship for the further two years it took to complete my BA."

After she finished her studies Edith was offered work with a Presbyterian church in Rwanda that required her to train in computing. The pastor of her Presbyterian church in Kenya helped her learn the skills she needed but the job never eventuated.

"So I stayed in Kenya, I looked for work but in Kenya many people are university educated but there are no jobs. I declared myself as a refugee in Kenya with the United Nations High Commission of Refugees. Not many people want to hire a refugee."

She found work with a refugee women's organisation. "You were paid per piece of sewing".

A cousin of Edith's moved to New Zealand and applied to the government "for us to join him as a member of his family. People from New Zealand came to interview me and then we waited".

Three-and-a-half years later, in March 2008, Edith and her daughters arrived in New Zealand.

"We were refugees so we had to live at the refugee centre in Mangere in Auckland where we were taught about New Zealand and had English lessons.

Two months later, Edith and family moved to Wellington. She was assisted by Christina, a volunteer with Refugee Services, who helped her with her first visits to the school, shops, post office, bank and to the doctor. She also helped Edith enrol at New Zealand Fashion Technology where she would complete a Certificate of Garment Technology - and go on to find work with a hat manufacturer.

A house was provided near Edith's cousin in Lower Hutt. She describes the house as a "miracle".

"It had everything we needed inside. It was amazing and very exciting."

When Edith had learned she would be moving to New Zealand she had prayed that she would find a house walking distance to a Presbyterian church because she could not drive.

"My prayers were answered because I was provided with a house very close to St Columba Presbyterian."

The first Sunday that Edith and her daughters attended church, she says, the congregation at St Columba seemed quite surprised to see Africans. And they in turn were surprised by the small size of the congregation.

"There were very few people. Our churches in Africa are big and full with singing and children running about. My children, who were 12 and 13 years, were wondering what kind of church it was because there were no young people. I asked some women, 'Where are your children and grandchildren?' I was wondering how we were going to continue because there were

no services for youth. But they started a youth group and we were welcomed. One older woman, Annette, befriended us and was like a grandmother to my children. We love her, she died last year. All the people in St Columba are family."

Edith attended St Columba regularly and was invited by the elders to take a more active role in the life of the church.

"They started asking me to help with the offering, then to be on the welcoming team on the door, and to be involved in the women's group. I started out being shy but because of how friendly they all are it didn't last."

Late last year two members of the church asked Edith if they could nominate and support her to be considered for election as a new church elder.

"I was surprised, I told them, 'If God wants me to serve the church I will not say no'. I was thinking I would not be elected. But I was elected a church elder and I am still praying that God uses me to do what he wants me to do."

In mid-2012 Edith brought her sister's family from Rwanda to New Zealand.

When Edith had learned she would be moving to New Zealand she had prayed that she would find a house walking distance to a Presbyterian church because she could not drive.

"They live with me because they didn't come as refugees they came as migrants, so I had to agree with Immigration to support them. My sister is the last of my family. I have been alone since 1994, just my daughters, so I thought I could support them because they were a small family with just one child. But by the time they came here they had three children. It has been very, very costly. You become poor. It's not easy supporting eight people. My nephew is at college. My daughters are nearing the end of their time at college and will go to university to study accounting and medicine; I don't want to neglect them. You want to help everyone but it is tough financially."

Angela Singer [@spanz](#)

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NewWine
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Book groups provide fellowship

Reading is no longer a solitary activity for the thousands of Kiwis involved in book discussion groups.

The book discussion scheme (BDS), based in Christchurch, has a library of around 755 titles and loans books and professionally produced book notes to self-directed book groups around the country.

Established 39 years ago as a way to promote reading and on-going learning, the scheme aims to broaden minds through reading and discussion, and to strengthen communities and promote a just and equitable society.

Like many other non-profit organisations, the scheme utilises volunteers as well as a small number of part-time staff who are responsible for book repairs, cataloguing, dispatching and returning books.

Those who belong to the more than 1,000 book discussion groups nationwide, speak unanimously of the fellowship provided by the groups.

Annie Boardman, a part-time BDS employee, says real friendships are nurtured at the groups.

"It's not just meeting once a month. There is friendship there that continues to grow and develop. We're involved in each other's lives."

Annie is a member of two book discussion groups – a neighbourhood-based one which she has been part of for 17 years, and a more recent group that includes her daughters and people from her church.

She says she values the opportunity the group provides for her to hear the insights of others.

"When you read something it's solitary, and when you come together to discuss it, it's quite the opposite. Discussion absolutely enriches the story you've read."

Annie says one of her favourite jobs is being involved on BDS' book selection committee, which is the group responsible for selecting the 50 or 60 titles that are added to the BDS catalogue each year.

The selection committee is aided in its role by a reader's network made up of people from book discussion groups around the country, who read and review potential new books.

The Rev Martin Stewart minister at St Stephen's Presbyterian in Bryndwr, Christchurch, has been a member of Annie's most recent discussion group for a few years, and says he and his wife Anne joined because the busyness of life meant their novel reading was falling by the wayside.

Martin has a personal goal of reading two novels for every theological book he reads "because novels are one of the best windows into the world and human condition".

"Theology texts are immersed in the Church, and novels are immersed in the world and the Church needs to listen more to the world."

He says books are a rich source of illustrations for his sermons and often references or quotes from books he's read during services. Martin also enjoys the challenge of reading genres and titles

The scheme deliberately has a diverse range of material to suit a variety of interests.

which he wouldn't necessarily have chosen for himself.

The scheme deliberately has a diverse range of material to suit a variety of interests. Around 70 per cent of the BDS catalogue is fiction, and just about every genre is available. Groups can opt to read a book per month or a book every two months. There is also an option that provides a book a month for five months during the academic year.

Lottie Boardman, inspired by mother Annie's participation in the discussion group, joined one of her mother's groups in Christchurch, and also set up two groups at the University of Canterbury in consultation with the university's chapter of Golden Key International Honour Society. Lottie's original plan was to set up a single group, but when 21 people showed interest, two groups were formed.

She says while the groups are in hiatus over the summer, she's had many people say they're keen to join in again in 2013.

"I really enjoy having interesting discussions with people. It's really good to have a prompt to talk about important issues. The mixed reactions to the books exposed us to different perspectives. It allowed us to explore," she says of the books including, *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that her group read during the 2012 academic year.

For more information about the Book Discussion Scheme, see www.bds.org.nz

Jose Reader [Spanz](#)



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Friends of Jagadhri fund nursing scholarships

Six lucky nursing students at Christian Hospital in Jagadhri, North West India will be offered a half-fee scholarship every year by Friends of Jagadhri.

The group's Convenor, the Rev Doreen Riddell, says the scholarships are being offered to two new students every year, during the three-and-a-half year diploma course in General Nursing and Midwifery.

"Ultimately we will be funding six students, two doing their first year, two doing their second year and two doing their third year," she says.

Each scholarship is worth just over a thousand dollars.

Doreen says the School of Nursing at the hospital has grown in the last 10 years, with 60 young women graduating every year.

The two scholarship recipients this year are Poonam Patras and Sonika Samuel, both of whom are both active in the church and come from poor families.

Poonam's father was a daily wage labourer who passed away six years ago. She has four brothers and helps with Sunday School classes.

Sonika's father has a small tea-stall in Yamuna Nagar and he has taken a loan with high interest to pay for Sonika and her sister's education.

In addition to the scholarships, Friends of Jagadhri is also working with Global Mission to bring a senior tutor from the Jagadhri Nursing School to attend the Universal College of Learning in Palmerston North.

The tutor, Akshay Harrison, is due to arrive in in March for six to eight weeks to gain experience at UCOL.

Friends of Jagadhri is paying his airfares while his accommodation needs and



Jagadhri Nursing School senior tutor, Akshay Harrison, with his family. Friends of Jagadhri and Global Mission will bring him to New Zealand to attend UCOL in Palmerston North.

internal travel costs will be met by Global Mission and the parish of St Mark's and St Andrew's in Palmerston North.

Akshay says he feels privileged to be selected to come to New Zealand for training.

"I will be able to share the new techniques and skills with my colleagues and the students of Christian Hospital, Jagadhri. This will help the students when they finish their training to understand international standards which will give them more confidence to work in tertiary level hospitals.

"I would like to thank all the Friends of Jagadhri, the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the School authorities for their kindness, concern and sacrificial giving of their resources, which has made it possible for me to visit New Zealand. I also want to thank all friends who will host me in their homes. Please continue to pray for my visit."

Global Mission coordinator, the Rev Phil King, who is overseeing the arrangements for the visit, says that providing support for the teaching staff at the Christian Hospital is a good way to build on our long-standing partnership with the Church of North India.

Christian Hospital was founded in 1911 by Dr William Porteous, the first missionary to India appointed by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Friends of Jagadhri group was founded in 1986 by retired accountant Hugh Beattie, Mrs Beattie and friends in Christchurch, because they wanted the Church to do more to support the hospital.

The first major project undertaken was to raise funds for an X-ray machine.

Over the years the Friends of Jagadhri has helped to build a water tower and install a modern water pump and reticulation system; buy an ultrasound scanner, and build a new complex to house the X-ray and scanner.

Friends of Jagadhri has also helped with the construction of accommodation for senior staff at Christian Hospital, and the renovation of the office block and Nursing School facilities.

When Mr Hugh Beattie died in 2007 it was decided the group needed to move its base to Hamilton, with Doreen as Convenor.

Doreen worked for the Presbyterian Church in Jagadhri for 34 years. She was Principal of the former Christian Middle School for Girls in Jagadhri and was instrumental in opening St Thomas, a school which started with five students in 1966 and has over 2000 students today.

Doreen also chaired the management committee of the Christian Hospital Jagadhri from 1970 to 1993.

Doreen says her time in India was "most fulfilling and rewarding".

"It was *busy as*, but very satisfying."

Other projects in India that Friends of Jagadhri and Global Mission will be funding this year are: an 18-month Auxiliary Nurse Midwife course; renovations to two classrooms and three practical laboratories at Christian Hospital, and funding additional equipment needed at the hospital.

Christine Gounder Spanz

Jo Grimm received support from Calvin Presbyterian to travel to Madampe, Sri Lanka, where she managed a girls' home.



Calvin's mission knows no bounds

Reaching out to the marginalised is at the heart of Calvin Presbyterian's mission in New Zealand and beyond.

Not only is considerable financial resource – around \$19,000 in 2012 to 2013 – given to their mission programme, but the congregation also commits a huge amount of prayer, personal time and energy to supporting missionaries and ministries as far away as Sudan... and as close as Gore.

Calvin's mission – global and local – is overseen by its "Beyond Ourselves" group, which is made up of congregation members. The group has been busy for the last 18 months or so revamping the congregation's mission policy.

The new policy, which is before elders for consideration, sets new guidelines for managing Calvin-supported missionaries and ministries, and aims to put in place a clearer framework for the integrity of the church's mission programme and welfare of supported missionaries, says Jo Grimm who was involved with developing the new 40-page policy.

"It covers everything from outlining a process for when approaches are made for funding, to how we decide what to support, and how we engage with and support returning missionaries," says Calvin's minister the Rev Ken Williams.

Calvin Presbyterian in Gore supports several missionaries and ministries including Camp Columba; David Gow in his work with the Word of Life Ministry in Hamilton; Bruce and Carol Symons who work with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Australia; Joy McRae's work in children's homes in Russia; Fairlie and Nilanthi Sim who are pastoring the International Church in the Sudan; and Margaret Currie's work with the Prison Fellowship in Mongolia and the Kithu Sevana Church in Sri Lanka.

Kithu Sevana

Kithu Sevana is an indigenous church, which has a strong focus on service-oriented ministries that reach out to men, women and children who are often overlooked, rejected and ignored. Based in Sri Lanka, the church also works with partners in other Asian countries as well.

While Ken says the parish isn't at the point of calling the relationship with Kithu Sevana (meaning "shadow of Christ") Calvin's primary mission partnership, it is certainly a significant connection for those in the parish, he says.

So much so, that Kithu Sevana founder, Rev Adrian de Visser, has been invited to be the guest speaker at Calvin's annual church camp in April.

The reason the relationship with Kithu Sevana is so strong, Ken says, is because of how the connection came about - through a former Calvin pastor, Fairlie Sim and his wife Nilanthi. The fact that so many



For Calvin's 'Beyond Ourselves' group, Kithu Sevana Church in Sri Lanka is a significant mission.

people in the congregation have first-hand knowledge of Kithu Sevana's ministry through newsletters, mission trips, visits by pastor Adrian to Calvin, and other personal connections, is also important Ken says.

"It is a strong relationship because there are a lot of people who've had a lot of hands-on contact. It has a high profile in the parish. It's something that people are excited about."

Jo Grimm has been on three Calvin-supported mission trips to the Kithu Sevana's Sri Lankan base, and was so inspired by her first visit, that she felt called to return and volunteer.

The girls home where Jo volunteered during 2011 and 2012 is based in Ape Kedella, Madampe, on a 10-acre property which includes a facility that provides residential care and support for 35 young girls aged 5-16; a boys' home for around 25 children; a facility that provides vocational training programs for up to 16 widows and their children; and a Christian campsite that is mainly used by inter-denominational churches, and youth groups

In her role as manager of the girls' home she oversaw that jobs got done, was "Mum" to the children, and was responsible for discipline and for the overall running of the home.

Jo says it was enormously rewarding to be part of the girls' home, and that language was the biggest challenge.

"I could understand more than I could speak. I was unable to go into detail, and I would instead show things with action.

"For instance, after the kids came home from school and I asked about their day, it was hard to really understand what they were talking about. They would say 'good', but I couldn't go any deeper. I did have a young translator. She did well but her English was not great."

Spreading the Christian message isn't easy in predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka, so house churches are a large part of the Kithu Sevana model.

Kithu Sevana missionaries go into areas where there is little or no Christian presence and start off by serving the community and meeting their needs, Jo says. They will then start speaking about Jesus as the opportunity arises.

One ministry - the Esther Centre for Women in Madampe - has become a safe haven and place of refuge to dozens of women. Here, widows and single mothers, who are traditionally shunned in Sri Lankan society, are given a break - a one year period in which they can gain a skill and heal from the many emotional and physical traumas they have suffered.

As well as the widow's centre, Kithu Sevana's ministry in Sri Lanka includes an alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre, providing residential care for teens and unwed mothers and neglected and abused children. They also run educational and skills development projects.

Kithu Sevana's model for serving the poor and neglected has now extended beyond the shores of Sri Lanka and includes partnerships with local churches and

Christian leaders in other Asian countries. For example, in Cambodia, Kithu Sevana has begun a ministry with girls rescued from the sex industry and is working with local churches in empowering them to take this ministry forward.

Prison Fellowship Mongolia

Margaret Currie, a missionary working with Prison Fellowship International in Mongolian prisons, was sent by St Andrew's Gore, and has been supported prayerfully and financially for many years by Calvin Presbyterian.

Margaret is the executive director of the Mongolian chapter of Prison Fellowship and she heads a small team of Mongolian people who work with inmates and their families.

Serving more than 6,000 prisoners through their work providing vocational training and mentoring, Margaret and her team are positively impacting on the lives of those incarcerated in the country's approximately 25 prisons.

Prison Fellowship, along with other NGOs, is working to improve the generally poor conditions in the prisons, which can include insufficient heat (in winter the temperature can get as low as -30C), insufficient food, abuse of prisoners and inadequate medical care.

Despite the work of Prison Fellowship being viewed with scepticism by some prison authorities, Margaret's team make regular prison visits, support dying inmates to find hospice care (authorities often try to release terminal inmates to avoid a prison death statistic), and provide programmes in prison and programmes for inmates' families to help them survive once their loved one is incarcerated.

One of the current projects for Prison Fellowship Mongolia is the development of a two-year Prison Social Worker training course to allow newly appointed and existing social workers to make a real difference in inmates' lives.

Despite the challenging conditions, Margaret says in her regular emails to supporters, that with prayerful support and God's provision, Prison Fellowship can continue to make a valuable difference in the lives of those incarcerated in Mongolia's prisons.

Jose Reader [Spanz](#)



Thailand trip reminds church members how blessed their lives are

The Rev Rob Pendreigh, and five members of the Cromwell & Districts Presbyterian Church in Central Otago, returned from a mission trip to Thailand determined to never again take for granted the luxuries in their daily lives.

The catalyst for the trip was a visit to the church, in 2011, by Malcolm and Sandy Potter, former Cromwell church members. For the past 11 years the Potters have run a youth hostel, the Baan Faa Mai Tribal Youth Centre, for the poor and orphaned in the village of Mae Chaem, two-and-a-half hours north of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand.

Cromwell has long supported the hostel financially and with prayer.

"The church hadn't visited the hostel for a significant amount of time, so I accepted the invitation to go because I knew I could prepare people for what to expect as I'd been to Baan Faa Mai with members of my former church, East Taieri," Rob says.

Malcolm Potter and youth from the Baan Faa Mai Hostel in Thailand prepare ground for planting.

"I asked the congregation, 'Who will join me on the three-and-a-half-week trip?' mindful that we were going to serve God and not as tourists. All our volunteers had skills that could be called on to make a difference: Wayne Bell is an irrigation specialist, Lane Coughlin is a joiner, and Murray Robertson is an engineer. At the youth hostel we needed our youth – so Laura Winstanley and my daughter Emma volunteered, both are 17."

Rob says that young people aged between 12 to 18 years typically live at the hostel for three years and approximately 200 children have lived at the hostel over the past 11 years. Many have gone on to study at university and several have become teachers. Currently 60 young people reside there.

After a year of fundraising, Rob and his team arrived in Chiang Mai in June 2012 and travelled with the Potters to the village of Mae Chaem.

"We had planned what we would each do at the hostel. Two of our engineer Murray's projects were rebuilding eight sets of bunks, and building from scratch a bed for a pastor and his wife who had to sleep on the floor on a thin foam mattress. Murray spent much of the trip in a welding helmet in temperatures that were already pretty near boiling."

"Lane, our joiner, is very skilled - he took third place in New Zealand's World

Skills Championship. The hostel's indoor and outdoor kitchens had pots and pans everywhere so he made a bush-style custom kitchen. He also made space-saving shelving units."

"Emma and Laura spent their days painting and varnishing, and when the hostel's young people returned from school they took a two-hour English lesson."

Each evening Rob led devotions with the children aged up to 16 years, and Emma, Laura and Lane led the older teens in a kind of youth group.

"Teaching each other games and sharing about their lives and faith," Rob says.

The parish raised funds for a 4,000 litre water tank and filtration system that Wayne installed.

"Now the hostel's waste water goes into the water tank and is then pumped up the hill to a vegetable garden," Rob says,

The team also spent time in another village that was so remote it did not have road access.

"The village of Yot Pai is basic. People cook in a hole in the floor and sleep on bamboo."

Rob says that after travelling "10,500 miles to say hello" he was saddened to learn that the village elders had forbidden the villagers to speak to them. Although the Karen hill tribe people are predominantly Christian, he says, "The villagers sacrifice to the spirits, and the elders felt that our visit might upset the spirits".

"We had only come to encourage the people and speak about what it is to be part of the body of Christ. Well, about 30 people defied the elders, and women defied their husbands, to meet us for worship in a tiny hut. Knowing that they had made this choice we felt really humbled.

"Through Thai translators a number of the women said they now felt 'much closer to Christ'. And they asked Lane, the only young man in our group, if he had a wife!"

Rob says all of the team are determined not to forget how blessed their lives are after meeting "people who are just so hospitable, yet have nothing".

If your church would like support the Potter's mission, contact World Outreach International, www.world-outreach.com. Read more about the Cromwell trip to Thailand at www.cromchurch.co.nz

Angela Singer Spanz

Helping Haitians help themselves

Great results have come from helping Haitians to help themselves according to reports from Christian World Service's long standing Haitian partner.

After the Haitian earthquakes, CWS funded both immediate large scale relief efforts and long-term responses.

The emergency aid effort was channelled through CWS global partner, ACT Alliance, while the longer term help went to CWS Haitian partner group, Institute Cultural Karl Leveque (ICKL).

The pain and plight of Haiti is well documented. Even before the 2010 quake, Haiti was the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere with a reputation for corruption and poor Government.

Free market policies and political interference from the United States have also contributed to instability in Haiti.

Three years after the devastating 2010 earthquake there are still an estimated 350,000 people living in 496 temporary camps, many bedevilled by gangs, sexual violence and the threat of forced eviction.

The Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organisations (POHDH) to which ICKL belongs is highly critical of the conditions in the camps and the political climate that keeps the situation unresolved.

In the interim, they want to see a national social housing policy set up and properly funded, a code of reconstruction for Haiti, and an end to forced evictions.

The ICKL stance has always been that the best way to help Haitians is to support groups like theirs because they are run by Haitians.

Over the past three years CWS has sent ICKL NZ\$37,304. This fundraising was helped hugely by the focus on Haiti as a special project for Presbyterian and Methodist women.

What the ICKL has achieved using these funds has been impressive.



The new community school at Cotterelle.

ICKL spokesman Pierre-Louis Muller recently reported on what had been achieved last year:

- More than 300 farmers received help with goat breeding, seed distribution and other projects through microcredit programmes.
- Three small community businesses had been set up or enhanced, which have in turn funded four community schools in Marigot, Belle-Fontaine and Verrettes.

The community businesses include a grain mill in Tet Kole Marigot and two bakeries in Belle Fontaine and Verrettes, with work on a third bakery now starting in Dorilas, Petit Goave.

- 41 homes have been repaired in Dorilas, 68km from the capital Port-au-Prince.
- 71 farmers in Dorilas have been able to farm more effectively with better economic results.

Pauline McKay, CWS national director, says that ICKL is "A great example of a local partner using local knowledge to make the most of their funding opportunities".

The provision of extra funding for the community schools and setting up of businesses to provide cash flow to support them is also significant in a land where Government support for schools is low (the schools are managed by local peasant farmer groups with no Government support).

The pain and plight of Haiti is well documented. Even before the 2010 quake, Haiti was the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere with a reputation for corruption and poor Government.

The extra funding for the schools helped pay teachers' wages and training, and was used for furniture and goods such as 3000 books and other school supplies distributed to 511 students.

Pauline says the results ICKL have achieved are both "effective and connected".

Interchurch Unity: Churches Working Together – a social issues study booklet for Presbyterian and Union churches

The latest Presbyterian Church social issues booklet titled, *Interchurch Unity: Churches Working Together* explores how churches of different denominations can find ways to work together in a joint sense of mission.

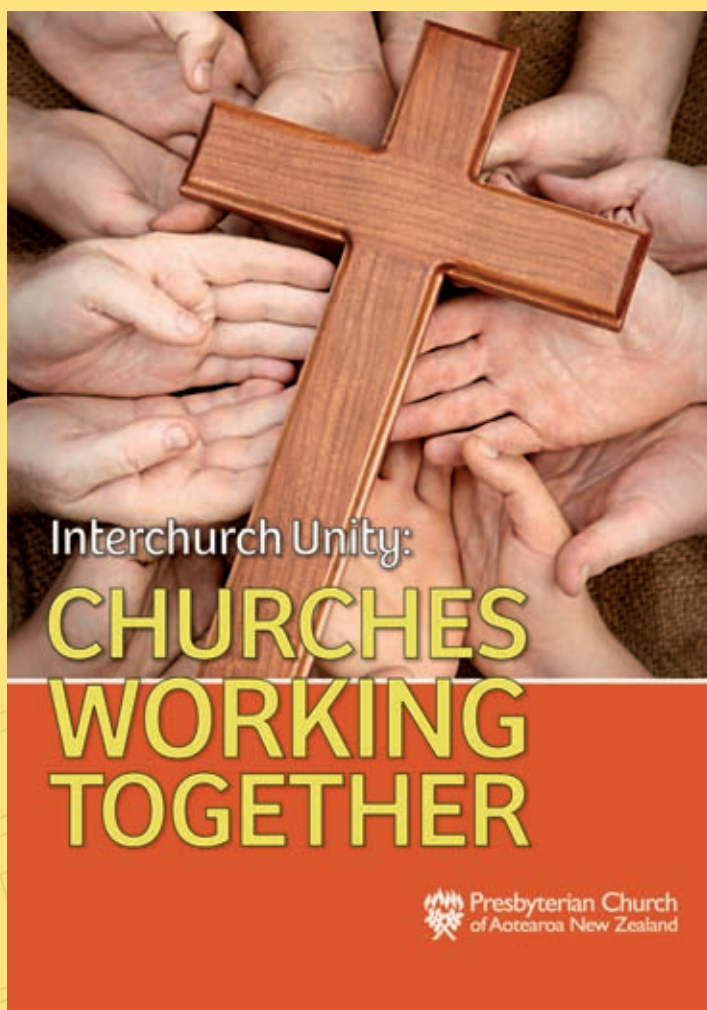
The booklet looks at what ecumenism and interchurch cooperation means, its history, evolution and its future.

It explores the biblical mandate for the unity of the church and examines the similarities and differences between denominations. It suggests how churches can engage effectively with other denominations, and challenges us to give a greater priority to working with other Christians in our communities.

The booklet also discusses how our Korean and Pacific congregations are contributing to what it means to be Presbyterian.

The study emphasises the importance of cooperation, especially for declining congregations, and in times of natural disaster.

This is the tenth in a series of group study booklets produced by the Presbyterian Church to encourage congregations to reflect about contemporary issues that are impacting our communities.



Copies of Interchurch Unity: Churches Working Together will be sent to all churches in early March.

If you would like more free copies please email office@presbyterian.org.nz or phone (04) 801 6000 or download copies here <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/speaking-out/resources-for-speaking-out> Free copies of the other social issues study booklets are also available.

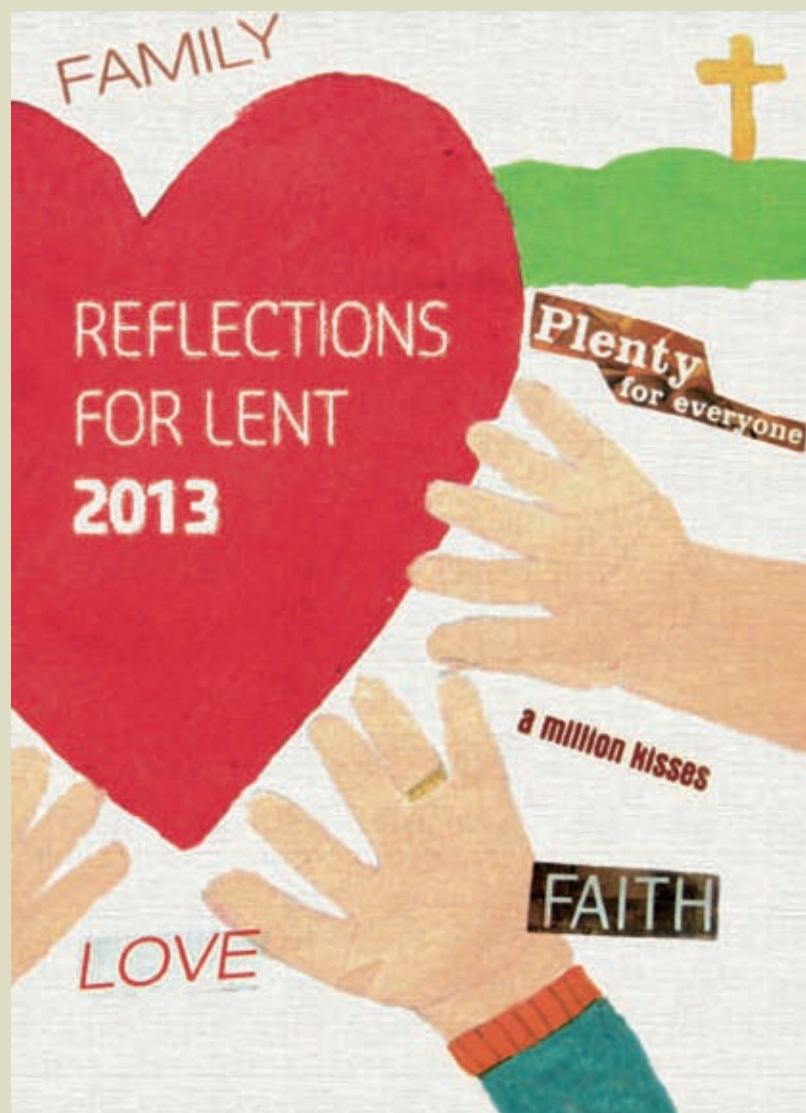
Download the PresCare 2013 Lenten resource

Over the 40 day period of Lent, PresCare invites congregations to focus on our shared concerns at this very significant time in our Christian faith.

PresCare

PresCare is a partnership between the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Support.

PresCare looks for ways our shared faith and commitment can respond to the needs and nurture the wellbeing of children and families in Aotearoa. You can read more about PresCare on the Church website www.presbyterian.org.nz/prescare



The 2013 PresCare Lenten resource was mailed to all parishes in December 2012.

If you would like more copies please download them from the Church website

<http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/ps-lent-reflection-2013-web.pdf>

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