



Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

SUMMER 2015, ISSUE 64

Churches join in
overseas
mission

www.presbyterian.org.nz

COMMENT: ROXY GAHEGAN

Choosing Chaplaincy

When I began the KCML internship programme two years ago, I was looking forward to parish ministry and had no thought of school chaplaincy. I was anticipating journeying with a community of faith and all that entails: learning and growing together; guiding and empowering others to lead by cultivating the kind of environment that affirms and forms faithful living. But then the position of chaplain at St Cuthbert's was brought to my attention and I found I was interested despite the fact that it did not fit my idea of what God had called me to. I pondered the possibilities and sifted through the elements that influence the discerning process, all the while listening for God's still small voice. And as I did I recognised some grief and fears; that some assumptions were colouring my perceptions.

To begin with, not leading a congregation of faith felt like a loss of the very thing I'd been working towards. I was also concerned that school chaplaincy might be regarded as a soft option or a subsidiary ministry prone to wishy-washiness. That chaplaincy presented the possibility of leading a community that was simply giving lip service in worship and that my role might contribute nothing more than a moral and godly seal of approval in the tradition of Oxbridge was indeed a horrifying prospect. Was that the likely reality of the role? Might there be similar dangers hidden in parish ministry? I know how easy it is to slip into a business-as-usual approach to ministry and life. For the most part we human beings like

routine. We often resist change. Why would I assume that the danger of the form of worship becoming an empty husk is more likely in a school setting than in a parish?

The school context made me wary of being pressured to constrain the gospel in a way that I would not have considered likely in a congregation. How passionately and sincerely will I be permitted to proclaim the gospel, as per the job description, when I must also do so with care and respect for those from other faith traditions? Here I was assuming that those in congregations are indeed open to the claims of the gospel on our hearts and lives, and willing to hear and respond to the challenges of faithful living. And since we are all called to share the good news of reconciliation and grace in a pluralistic society, finding ways to do so that are respectful and caring ought not to be considered limiting, I think.

When I contemplated worship in the school context, I wondered how many people in the chapel services might be there simply out of a sense of duty, and how that might affect my sense of community and commitment. I wouldn't have thought to ask this question in relation to a congregation, but duty, tradition and habit are all real and significant factors in Sunday attendance. They are not necessarily unworthy reasons to be at worship.

I also wondered if there would even be a group of people within this vast school community that were truly looking for ways and opportunities to serve and worship God – to bring life and faith into step with each other. I would never think



Roxy Gahegan

to ask this question of a congregation, but I began to wonder why I should assume that deafness and resistance to God's love and compassion exist outside the church but not within.

In the end it was the possibilities and the clear sense of call in my excitement over those that led me to choose chaplaincy. After all, here were a group of people, the majority of whom would not step into a church in any other context, that I will get to talk to about God. Here were opportunities to speak another word, to give another perspective, to sow tiny gospel mustard seeds of possibility and meaning and significance. That is a prospect that has promise to be challenging, exciting and rewarding - assuming only, this time, on God's grace and presence.

Roxy Gahegan is a recent graduate of Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Dunedin. She takes up the role of chaplain at St Cuthbert's College, Auckland in January 2016.

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MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

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



Imagine

I started out wanting to write something significant to the Church about the life and death of imagination. I'd begin by stating how we have lost our imagination through neglect and fear, and suggest ways we need to rediscover it again.

For many people, their imagination is stuffed into the sock drawer keeping company with fear.

It's rather sad, since by nature we are created in the imagination of God. What if we could rediscover our divine spark once again? What a difference that would make!

Imagine what it would be like if the Church rediscovered its imagination?

I have an uneasy relationship with the Church. It's often referred to as a building, a system or "them". We all know this is not true, but we continue to live the "church myth" just like Santa, except Santa is much nicer. A building or system has no capacity to care – let alone imagine.

So then, I started thinking about you, not "them" but you, because you are the Church, I am the Church, we are the Church together. There is no "it" or "them" only you and I – we're it!

So if you'll let me, I'd like to lift the lid on your imagination.

*You could've never imagined life without
the sound of her voice*

until the unimaginable day arrived.

*A deadening of the soul,
then silence, a very long silence;
a corridor between doors, dark
and unending.*

*Waiting became the new norm of
grey promises.*

*I don't know how it came but somehow,
somewhere,
walking from the front door to the
mail box*

*you were distracted from your
concrete path*

*by a blackbird busy collecting dead grass
to build a nest.*

*A voice spoke saying, "this season to
imagine again".*

Maybe you lost your imagination leaving childhood, or stood her up on the dance floor as a teenager?

Maybe your imagination died the day mystery left the garden and you thought you knew it all?

Maybe life got too hard for you and your imagination got abducted and now suffers as a slave to worry?

Whatever happened, I've got good news for you. Your imagination is not lost. You may have been lost to her, but she was never lost to you, and you must let her find you on the way to the mailbox.

Begin with the first step.

Imagination is an invitation for you to be found.

Be excessively gentle with your thoughts; the still, small voice cannot be heard by those who shout.

Be patient; allow the germ of an idea its unhurried way of being. Let it be free from your own obsession of defining and understanding.

Listen to the voices of necessity and pain, even they speak of a world unborn; a new reality.

Get out of your mind and walk into the nature of things. Hold a summer dandelion in your hands and blow its seeds into the wind. That's imagination!

Notice! Be distracted from the hard path of sameness. Open your eyes to a world of wonder.

Pay attention; like a prayer, it's what you give your life to and like the black bird, start collecting dead grass, build a nest; a container for new beginnings.

"Now unto Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or even imagine!" (Eph 3:20)

OVERSEAS MISSIONS: FAITH IN ACTION



St Helier's Presbyterian Church supports boats that travel to remote villages along the Tom River in Siberia, taking necessities and prayer, and performing Bible plays to villagers.

As technology, travel and mass migrations shrink the world to the size of a multicultural village, Presbyterian churches increasingly feel called to direct involvement in overseas missions, to visit and share skills with missionaries in both Christian and non-Christian countries. We look at a how a number of churches are making a difference in the world.

Supporting education in Zambia

In May this year, Howick Church's minister the Rev Kevin Finlay and his wife Miranda visited the Limapela Foundation in Zambia for the first time. The church has supported the Foundation since its inception seven years ago, and had close contact with its Kiwi directors Matthew and Alison Raymond.

Matthew is an elder in the Greyfriars Eden Epsom Church, which also supports the Foundation. Born in Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia) to missionary parents, he returned to Africa with Alison in 1987. In 2008, they had US\$300 for a vision that would require more like \$1 million. Their aim was to build and direct Christian-based schools in the country's northern copperbelt region.

Five years later, Kevin and Miranda arrived at Limapela to witness its two rural primary schools near Kitwe and Ndola with 750 pupils enrolled, pass rates above the national average, and on their way to being self-sufficient. Vegetable

gardens, 2,300 banana trees and 1,000 chickens provide an income that helps reduce reliance on international funding.

The Finlays took a hands-on role during their two-week visit, teaching a basic Christian education programme that reinforces the message that "Jesus loves me" and singing with the kids.

Zambia is a Christian country, with religion in the core curriculum, so there is little if any resistance to sharing the Gospel. For Miranda, it was the first time she had travelled overseas, witnessing both vulnerability and resilience walking hand-in-hand. She discovered that education is big business in Zambia and a political football, and just one area of life where a different approach is needed.

"It was a challenge to be confronted with how importing Western ideas of family, marriage, health, love, wealth and Christian living just didn't fit with their experiences of life," she says. "Yet the most lasting sense I came away with is one of our commonality and shared human experiences."

One school they visited had a newly opened library and IT building. "We enjoyed seeing the space and its potential," says Kevin. "There aren't any computers yet but the infrastructure's all there, so it represents how far they've come and how much there still is to do."

The Finlays have returned to pass that message on to their congregation. "The excitement and interest in the project has greatly increased, we've made it more tangible and many couples are now thinking that they could also visit," says Kevin.

Both Howick and Greyfriars sponsor individual students' modest school fees and Howick's Chiltern Kindergarten Trust pays the salary of a teacher. Volunteers and visitors are welcome but the biggest contribution is money, Alison explains. "It's difficult to get books and materials to Zambia," says Alison. "We know people have concerns about how much of their donation reaches those in need, so we stress that if people tag a donation then 100 per cent goes into that specific project, not admin."

To find out more about the Limapela Foundation, go to www.limapela.org

Risking life in south Sudan

Mahurangi Church's fundraising for overseas missions is also highly specific, whether it's for a toilet in India or a new roof in Sudan, so the congregation knows exactly where the money's going. They also decided to support missions they feel personally connected with.

"You get the overload factor with all the needs in the world and become desensitised," says David Young, chair of Mahurangi's Overseas Missions Committee. "Our church has a personal connection to all the people and missions we serve. We feel more motivated because of that."

A small team of prayer warriors also prays for those who need protection. This prayer is especially pertinent for church member and Mahurangi College Principal David Macleod. His son and daughter-in-law are medical doctors in war-torn Sudan. The country is still a dangerous place, despite a peace deal that was concluded a year ago between the two major tribes.



Missionary doctors Destinee and Jono Macleod and their two young children are supported in their work in Sudan by Mahurangi Church.



St John's Presbyterian in Mt Roskill works with New Life Ministries in Tanzania. The primary and secondary aged students they support come from homes that are "mud huts with animal styes in one corner and beds in the other".

Jono and Destinee Macleod have taken their two young children to a remote area called Tonj, supported by Mahurangi Church.

"Yes, they are putting themselves and their family at risk," says David Macleod. "The two main tribes don't like each other, the fighting came as close as 100km away. That's quite aside from the snakes, scorpions and various diseases. It is a worry but also a matter of faith. We know that they are where they are meant to be."

The couple met while studying medicine at the University of Auckland and have always had a burning passion to be missionaries.

"Both Jono and Destinee independently felt laid on their hearts to be missionary doctors," says David Young. "They worked steadily towards this goal with training in tropical medicine. It's their life calling. They're an amazing couple."

The internet, which is intermittent and not high quality, has been vital for communicating their mission, and their ongoing safety. Nobody from the church has been able to visit as getting from Auckland to Tonj involves seven flights and considerable expense. Earlier this year Destinee's father arranged a container, supported by the Mahurangi church and others, with house supplies and equipment for the Macleod's medical clinic. The clinic sees 80-100 patients per day, and the welcome supplies also get used during at-home antenatal visits and regular outreach clinics held under large trees in surrounding villages. Getting the container to Tonj was hazardous, says David.

"It was the rainy season and the roads are very poor. Many truck drivers were being killed at that time too, if they were travelling through an area dominated by a different tribe than their own."

Educating stars in Tanzania

In neighbouring Tanzania, children are the focus of the New Life Ministry, where an orphanage and school have come to the attention of government ministers for all the right reasons. The New Life Foundation primary and secondary schools in Moshi near Kilimanjaro are producing star pupils, with eight of the first secondary graduates picking up scholarships for universities in Dar es Salaam or the USA.

StJohn's in Mt Roskill has been supporting the orphanage's rapid growth for 10 years, in partnership with nearby Hebron Christian College.

Along with regular visits, the church gives direct financial donations from a bi-annual appeal, sponsors children. Hebron Christian College hosts Tanzanian teachers for six-week sabbaticals. "It's a real eye-opener for these teachers," says Rev Dr Colin Marshall, who has visited Tanzania four times. "The homes that the children come from are literally mud huts with animal styes in one corner and beds in the other, so that gives you an idea of the culture shock."

When in Tanzania Colin teaches leadership and pastoral theology including ethics, morality and boundary setting in Christian leadership. The mission team, including students from Mt Roskill church, take part in healing

rallies and praying with the sick for miracles. Miracles witnessed include the blind from birth receiving sight. In 2013, bombings caused sufficient concern for Colin's team to be provided with a military escort during their visit. "It's an experience to be surrounded by AK47s while preaching," Colin remarks.

There haven't been any problems since. Muslim government ministers have attended conferences and the big evening rallies where upwards of 50,000 people gather, to offer their support, as they acknowledge that areas with strong Christian communities have low or negligible crime rates and teenage pregnancies. The Tanzanian Police Commissioner has publicly urged Christian pastors to spread the Gospel.

"The government is so delighted by the positive change that the church has brought," says Colin, "that they said, 'We'll give you a letter and you'll never have visa problems again.'" Mission visas had attracted a subjective surcharge that could run to hundreds of dollars.

New Life is moving ahead with plans to feed the school's 400 children organically and sustainably from 100 acres of maize farm they have purchased to turn into an eco farm. NZ\$120,000 dollars needs to be raised for this project. A boundary of Neem and Moringa trees (which have insecticide and medicinal properties) will be planted to protect and surround the farm. When fully operational, the farm will produce out-of-season organic vegetables for selling at a premium.

You can find out more about the Tanzanian project at www.newlifetz.com or at www.hebron.ac.nz or contact Colin at colin@stjohns.org.nz



Limapela school in Zambia is one of two Christian-based schools built through the vision of Kiwis Matthew and Alison Raymond. The schools are supported by Howick and Greyfriars Eden Epsom churches.

Giving hope to kids in eastern Europe

Children are also the focus of an eastern Europe mission supported financially by Mahurangi Church. Diana Gherasimuic first encountered the Church when she worked as a nanny for David Young, the chairperson of Mahurangi's overseas mission group.

She was baptised at Mahurangi in 2005, not long before returning to her native Romania, where she continued teacher training in Bucharest, and also began sharing her Christian conversion with poor children in the city and in neighbouring Brezoala. This led Diana to form a dedicated team of young people from her church to run weekend programmes and then holiday camps for around 50 children.

"The camp week is possible because of the great team that God put together in this particular ministry," says Diana. "The kids love every moment of it. When they sit down, they never just sit down. They sit on us, the adults, they cuddle, they give us kisses."

Sponsorship of the individual children has come from the congregation since 2010, at \$150 per child. The church also financed the purchase of a car that makes Diana's daily activities more effective. In a country with a Communist history of repression, poverty and closure of churches, Diana has been through severe opposition to her Christian message, particularly when working with Romany gypsy families. Despite this, she remains undaunted and has a goal to work full-time in children's ministry.

Also working in eastern Europe is St Heliers Church, which was inspired in 2011 by a project that's now called "Jesus comes by water".

Olia Essina is a member of the parish. Her sister Elena and husband Peter were visiting New Zealand for the first time. Peter is a minister for the Tomsk Evangelical Church in Siberia, a place with a history of Stalin-era labour camps and a legacy of despair-induced drinking. The result is that parents neglect their children and their livelihoods. Peter and Elena had bought two condemned boats and renovated them. Once liveable, the boats began to travel along the Tom River to remote villages, taking not only necessities and prayer, but a group of young people aged 15-23 who perform Bible plays to villagers.

Peter and Elena wanted St Heliers' support with their next project, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Tomsk itself. "It was so exciting," says Olia. "We were blown away and wanted to help."

The centre is up and running, and the message of hope is spreading – one family at a time. More prayer centres are also starting to appear in some of the villages they visit. Regular updates are sent on both summer and winter visits (when Jesus has to arrive by snowmobile because the river is iced over). Olia visited her sister in Tomsk in August this year and heard first-hand about the latest trip.

"I was in Tomsk and at the church service when the group of youth reported what had touched them the most in the recent

trip," she says. "They talked about this home for disabled children with tears in their eyes."

In February, Peter, Elena and their son Andrei will visit to personally share their stories with the Church.

Healthy churches engage with local and global projects

Overseas missions are a two-way partnership, not a one-way gift from us to them, says Global Mission Coordinator the Rev Phil King.

"By sharing we grow together. God does work in us as we learn from the challenges of an unfamiliar cultural context," he says. "Missions never succeed if you go with a set agenda."

The sign of a healthy, balanced church is engagement with both local and global projects. It's not a case of one or the other, he stresses.

"Doing global helps us do local. Often we don't see the needs of our own neighbourhood clearly until we leave and come back. Those who plan a trip and travel together also bond and build strong, loyal relationships. They take ownership of a project and become more effective in everything they do."

Missionary business in Laos

Today's generation of missionaries is very different from the generations before it. Brought up during rapid political, social, cultural and technological change, they have received excellent training



Holiday camps for children in Romania are among the initiatives led by Diana Gherasimuic, with support from Mahurangi Church.



Young men get vocational training at the Lao Vida bakery in Laos, which is run by Christian missionaries.

and travelled widely. They put strong emphasis on personal relationships, are sensible, self-critical, creative, business-savvy and willing to work under indigenous leadership.

Yet, it is increasingly difficult to get a visa as a missionary, and even more so in countries that are hostile to Christianity. Karen Stephens had always wanted to be a missionary, so when she and her husband Andrew settled on Laos, they knew they'd have to be involved in a sustainable business. Starting out as ESOL teachers in the capital Vientiane in 1999, they moved to the rural south in 2008, with support from Hope Worldwide in Christchurch, and set up their own school. The locals named it Lao Vida.

"We've learned how to fix broken vehicles and plumbing, run a budget and manage a bakery and cafe," says Andrew. "To the point where local business people come to us for advice on how to run their business and get staff like ours."

The ESOL school has 300 students. Christians are often excluded from employment because of their faith so the cafe provides intensive work for eight to 10 young people. Young men aged 16-20 get vocational training through the bakery and go on to jobs in Vientiane or Thailand afterwards. The girls complete a domestic work course, then work for an agency and send their wages back to families in marginalised, poor villages. While training, they live in dormitories in houses rented with Hope support, and many of them convert to Christianity.

"We're teaching life skills around health and safety, work ethics, money and brain training," says Andrew. "There's a quiet Christian aspect, through daily prayer time. It's a bit difficult modelling Christian community and flying under the radar at the same time, but so far we haven't had any trouble because we don't cause any trouble for the authorities."

Andrew, Karen and the core team of workers are financially supported by Hope Worldwide. Upwards of 50 members from churches in Christchurch and Southland have visited to lend a hand over the years with building projects and summer outreach programmes. The Stephens are also looking for young people to take a gap year and volunteer with teaching English.

"We need young people to put spiritual muscle on their own faith," says Andrew. "A young man who volunteered with us said it was life-changing, an incomparable experience."

Hope Worldwide operates programmes in more than 70 countries. To find out more, visit www.hopeww.org

Working with our Kiribati neighbours

Closer to home, the Church has global partnerships in the Pacific. Mahurangi's involvement with Christian Kiribati came about because of changes in the church's own congregation. It had been a strongly European church, but because the area is agricultural there has been

a huge influx of workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu who've been integrated into the church.

"We've become a Pasifika engaged community," says David Young, of Mahurangi Church. "We've stretched to include the islands and to feel they are part of our family."

A church member came up with the idea of starting a Christian preschool in Kiribati. Mahurangi's minister the Rev Nick McLennan, local college principal David Macleod and a Kiribati elder Mrs Etitara Teaken travelled to the islands last year for a week. Nick and David's presence gave church and school leaders an opportunity to bounce ideas off each other. Having an interpreter who knew the local customs also helped both men identify specific needs throughout the islands. One of the projects will focus on re-engaging young people through music. "The music in the church is dated. There's so much musical talent that isn't being connected with. We can support them with teaching new songs."

The theological college also needs a volunteer for a year who can teach theological English, and preschool teachers with an ESOL background are also being sought to take on short-term assignments training preschool teachers. If you can help, get in touch with David Young on 09 425 4026 or email nick@mahu.org.nz

Jade Reidy Spanz

Special project makes a difference at home and overseas



The Neythal organization, which was formed to empower the women in the fishing communities of Tamil Nadu, South India, received 70 per cent of Presbyterian Women's special project funding.

Each year, Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand and the Methodist Women's Fellowship work together on a special mission project to assist people in need at home and overseas.

"We find organisations that may need help and contact them," says Joan Roberts, who has just finished her term as Presbyterian Women's Mission Convener. "If they meet our criteria our Conveners decide which will best catch the imagination of our members. We work with Christian World Service (CWS) on the overseas part – they provide a list of places, and we get together to choose one."

Presbyterian Women and MWF have worked in partnership since the late 1980s. For each project they prepare information packs to help churches understand the needs of the people in the selected areas. The churches then raise funds through events like morning teas, special services, and pot luck dinners.

"The money our women raise is a good example of the 'Widow's Mite'," says Joan. "It's the few 'coins', from our predominantly elderly women members, that when added with others, become a significant amount which makes a real difference."

The money is divided 70 per cent 30 percent between the domestic and international cause, alternating year on year. The 2014/15 *Together We Can* project saw Presbyterian Women across the country raise \$26,000 for Diabetes Youth and the Neythal organisation.

Neythal, which received 70 per cent of the funding, formed when women in the fishing communities of Tamil Nadu, South India, were empowered to

take an active role in civil and political life. It stands up for the rights of the community, and advocates for women and children. The group recently led the charge to stop the proliferation of illegal shrimp farming which was destroying fishing grounds, and met with government officials to discuss land rights.

Diabetes Youth put their funding towards camps for teens with diabetes, education for parents and families, and advocating for safe conditions at school and work for diabetes sufferers.

"Together we can make a difference to so many lives, and as diabetes is becoming the number one disease among our children we can tackle this problem with education," says Joan. "The camps will provide teens with education relevant to their needs, opportunities to connect with others, and a chance to build relationships and find support when they need it most."

This year's new project, *Empower To Restore*, is raising funds for The New Zealand Youth Foundation and the Developers Foundation in the Philippines. The Youth Foundation will use the money to produce a *Gemstones 2* booklet, a resource to reduce suicide rates and cyber bullying in the vulnerable Year 7 and 8 age group. It will help provide children with the skills to understand and deal with the problems around them.

For the overseas project, Joan stipulated the Pacific region, as the project had

helped those further afield for the previous two years. "Our funding will help to empower women in the Philippines to plan and focus on rehabilitation after Typhoon Haiyan, and to work with local government to ensure district and regional planning implements local needs," says Joan.

Developers Foundation works with very poor farmers, fisher-folk and their families. Before Typhoon Haiyan, they were largely self-funding thanks to a piggery set up with CWS's help. But the super typhoon destroyed the piggery and left almost every house damaged or destroyed.

Last year, Developers distributed corrugated iron for roofing, protecting more than 3,000 households from further rains. They repaired classrooms and water systems at remote schools and helped get families back on their feet.

"With small but consistent steps, we can recover from the damage the typhoon brought," says Tet Naraval of Developers Foundation. "The donations from the special mission project will add light and inspiration to our work, with the comfort of the knowledge that you are with us along the way."

Joan says she will miss her work as Convener. "I've loved every minute, and have learnt such a lot. It's so rewarding to set in motion a fundraising project and see it come to fruition. The results are amazing."

Kate Davidson [Spanz](#)

PRESBYTERIAN HELPS THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES RESETTLE IN HAMILTON



Barbara Redfern, centre, in her home office with her husband Doug and Mujgan Noori, a friend and client from Afghanistan.

Barbara Redfern of is a mainstay of the refugee community in Hamilton.

Barbara is known as “Mother” to thousands of refugee families – though at 82 she is more the age of their grandparents.

A member of the Discovery Christian Church – Fairfield Presbyterian Parish, she has helped more than 4,000 refugees with their new lives and is one reason why Hamilton has become a model centre for resettlement. For her work she has received a Hamilton Civic Award and is a MNZM.

In the early 1980s when Barbara began work with the Inter-church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement (later named Refugee and Migrant Service), New Zealand had just started to help settle people from South East Asia.

In 1979 she helped form the Waikato Refugee Resettlement Society as she felt refugees needed more ongoing support than was available.

The Society was registered at her home and today her open-door 24-hours on-call policy means there’s still a constant flow of people. “The most recent family arrived on the 18 August, a family of seven, including 10-month old twin girls, from the Congo. I’m still buying nappies and baby food and doing all those little things that go with refugee support,” says Barbara.

“My office is like a drop-in centre. There is a sofa, a computer, a piano, two toilets

and little spot in the corner with a cross where they can pray.”

“We do everything that is needed. That’s why people feel comfy and they are happy to come here. Some come with appointments; others just come. They know if I am not here I might be in the garden and they call out ‘Barbara’ – and I appear in my gardening clothes,” says Barbara.

Her husband, Doug, 88, calls himself “Mr Barbara”. “People say, ‘Is Mrs Barbara there?’ He says, ‘This is Mr Barbara.’” The couple have three sons, one in Auckland and two in Australia.

Currently Barbara is working with a Somali family and a young Burmese man applying for citizenship and a Somali boy applying for a passport.

“You have to do it with them, not for them. You have to be a bit of an English teacher yourself, multi-faceted and yet humble enough to spend time, effort and energy – with patience and goodwill,” says Barbara.

She believes acquisition of skills is very important. “We have good programmes – English, sewing, advocacy. We do home-based after-school teaching. Teacher aides and trained teachers do extra tuition in the homes. We subsidize it and the parents pay a bit. The parents can see what the children need and the progress being made.”

Barbara has a BA in Humanities from Waikato University and a Bachelor of Theology degree from Otago University.

She was the Women’s President of the Hamilton Council of Churches when she went with a National Council of Churches team to Japan in 1978. “I attended a Fellowship of the Least Coin conference, attended by women from every country in the world – except for Burma, Cambodia, (Laos) and Vietnam. It was a watershed in my life – seeing women from Korea and Japan who were only just getting over being sworn enemies.

“When I arrived home, the exodus of boat people started. They were brought into Hamilton – which was a very good place to bring refugees. In 1979 the then Mayor, Ross Jansen, brought all the ministers together. We met with every church. We all knew each other and all got on together.”

The main requirement for this sort of work she says is to be “a family-conscious person”.

“It’s like being a mother figure. You have to be available. And if you get cross or impatient, which you do, and you let fly or say words you wish you hadn’t, you apologise and make sure you explain, so they go away happy. Most of them know how they feel themselves and are very understanding. And many have a better sense of perspective and humour than we have.”

Being in her early eighties is mainly an advantage, Barbara says. “People look decently at you and listen to your views. But it has its drawbacks; it slows you up!”

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

Amorangi minister builds bridges in Māori community

Nawton Community Presbyterian Church in the small Hamilton suburb of Nawton has broken new ground in a bid to forge stronger links with its predominantly Ma-ori community.

For the first time, a largely Pākehā congregation has an Amorangi minister, the Rev Hone Te Rire, who was welcomed to the church on 27 September.

“Working with Hone we hope to bridge the gap between our congregation and the community, learning more about them and ways we can support them,” says Cathy Rogers, Nawton parish clerk.

“This will be a journey of discovery and a big learning curve for us. But hopefully our community will become more comfortable with us and gain a greater sense of belonging to the church as this is often the first step towards believing.”

Te Aka Puaho’s Amorangi trained ministers work on a part-time unpaid basis in church leadership roles.

As well as taking on the unpaid role of superintending moderator, Hone has been appointed for a fixed-term as a resource minister, a paid role. “We wanted to support Rev Hone financially in some way,” says Cathy.

Hone brings a wealth of experience to the church. He was ordained as an Amorangi minister in 2012, is fluent in te reo Māori, understands Māori tikanga and worldviews, and has a background in education. His iwi are Ngati Tuwharetoa, Tuhoe, Te Whanau a Apanui and Te Whakatohea. Hone was, until 28 August 2015, the Māori adviser for Presbyterian Support Northern, combining full-time work with his duties as an Amorangi minister.



Rev Wayne Te Kaawa, Moderator of Te Aka Puaho, (left) and Rev Mary Petersen, Moderator of Kaimai Presbytery, with Rev Hone Te Rire (centre) at his induction to Nawton Community Presbyterian Church in Hamilton.

Hone is responsible for guiding and assisting Nawton in worship and pastoral care, providing leadership on Presbyterian policy and procedures, and leading two of the church’s outreach programmes – a kids’ club and youth group.

“Much of it feels very familiar,” says Hone. “It’s what I’m about in terms of my ministry – he pononga o te Atua ahau – I am a servant of the Lord, of the people.”

“Part of the plan is to reach further into the community, to be a seen face – a kanohi kitea – at community and school events.”

He’s already making inroads as kaumatua and chaplain at Nawton Primary School located across the road from the church. The school has a mix of Māori-immersion, bilingual, and mainstream classes. He writes ‘Hone’s Korero’ column for the *Western Community News*. He is also talking with other schools and has produced a pamphlet offering his services at tangihana, weddings, baptisms, and for pastoral care in the community.

Leading the church service on alternate Sundays, Hone sets the tone with a welcome to the congregation in their respective languages – Māori, English, Niuean, and Cook Island – and uses both te reo Māori and English for the rest of the service.

“The reaction has been very positive,” says Hone, “with the congregation keen to learn by having the words of waiata in both languages on the screen.”

Hone grew up in Onepu and Kawerau and learnt te reo Māori at home and on the marae. He continued to develop his use of the language at university and through his children, all of whom went to Māori-language immersion schools. Today it’s the language of choice in his home, with his children, and his mokopuna.

“Māori language is very much a living language – I’m always learning new words and phrases. It’s exciting,” says Hone.

“Being an Amorangi minister is significant,” he says. “The congregation sees it as a point of difference. It’s neat because it’s what the church wants – a Māori minister in a community that has a relatively high number of Māori. The church felt if it was going to ‘walk the talk’ it needed to connect with the community, connect with whānau.”

Amorangi ministers run in Hone’s family. His grandfather Arapeta Te Rire was ordained in the early 1980s. His late father, Te Maungarangi Te Rire, was also an Amorangi minister, as is his uncle, Kahu Te Rire.

Hone says he is often asked if that had a bearing on his entering the Amorangi ministry. He laughs and says of course family was a factor, but it’s more than that.

“It is in my heart – a calling from God – not just following in my koro and father’s footsteps.”

Joan Begg Spanz

Praying for the community

A community's prayers are being answered thanks to an inspiring initiative by St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Te Puke.

A huge cross has been erected outside the church and attached to it is a letterbox for local people to post their prayer needs.

St Andrew's stays open every night, and the Open for Prayer team attends each and every evening to pray for the Te Puke community.

"The team has been going strong for two-and-a-half years now, and it's well known in the local community that our church is open all hours," says the Rev Mario Weyers.

The team consists of people from various churches, and three members of St Andrew's have been commissioned to be part of it. "They feel that God called them to this role," says Mario.

One team member is an elder, who gives feedback to the wider church in their meetings.

The community prayer request initiative started back in April explains Mario.

"We erected a small cross outside the church and encouraged people from the community who had urgent prayer needs to nail them to the cross.

"We were amazed at the huge response this generated in the community, and we saw that there really was a need."

So a couple of months ago Mario, along with Open for Prayer team member Scotty Barnett, decided to erect a larger, more permanent cross and letterbox outside the church. There is paper mounted above the box, so members of the public can just grab a piece and write down their prayer needs.

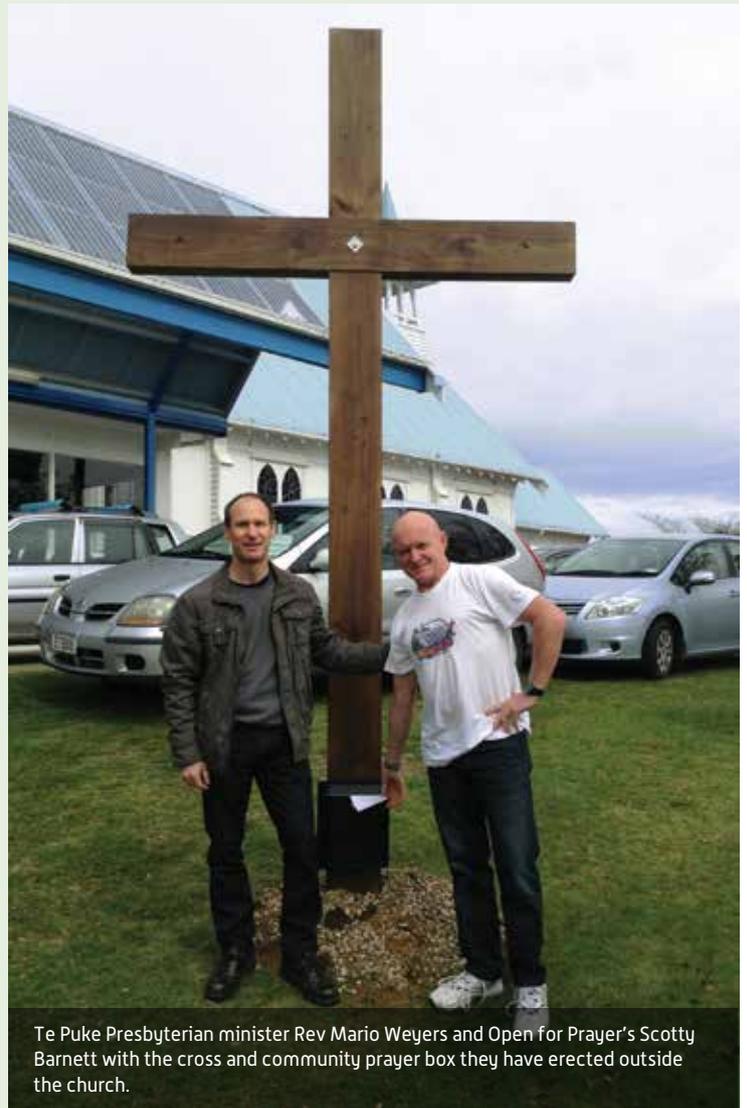
Since the cross was installed, the requests have continued to steadily pour in. The box is cleared each evening, and the team prays for the particular requests. Alternatively, locals can bring their requests along to the church itself, and people there will pray with and for them. After the prayers, the requests are posted on the noticeboard in the church's prayer room so others can pray for them, too.

The majority of prayer requests are related to physical ailments and illnesses. Some others are about family conflicts, and sometimes even abuse.

"The team has been especially blessed in the field of praying for the sick, and has seen many healings taking place," says Mario. Some of the most impressive include cancer being healed, depression lifted, and a snapped Achilles tendon completely mended.

"We've encouraged the community to let us know once their prayers are answered, and to write us a response. We are working hard to keep the community posted. We really want to keep the interest going, and hope that this project has a long life."

As well as praying for specific requests as they come in, the team prays for Te Puke and its businesses, schools and churches adds Mario.



Te Puke Presbyterian minister Rev Mario Weyers and Open for Prayer's Scotty Barnett with the cross and community prayer box they have erected outside the church.

"We pray for our nation, our government and other countries too, as well as more individual needs."

St Andrew's is also doing good work celebrating the different cultures in Te Puke. Mario and his family are originally from South Africa — he emigrated to New Zealand 18 months ago with his wife Mitsi and their two sons Stefan and Reinhardt.

Recently, the church held its first multicultural service in English, Afrikaans and Māori, which was a great success. Congregation members were encouraged to bring a dish from their culture for a shared lunch, and there was singing in all three languages.

"My family's first language is Afrikaans," says Mario. "There's no South African community in Te Puke as such, but Tauranga has an Afrikaans Church, Afrikaanse Christen Kerk, and they joined us for the service, which was great. We have a few parishioners who are Māori, and they contributed their cultural aspect too. Everyone had a great time.

"We will, God willing, have another multicultural service next year by including the Tongan Christian community that is currently using our church hall for their Sunday worship service.

"It will be exciting to include four languages—English, Tongan, Māori and Afrikaans — next time, and I look forward to being a part of it."

Kate Davidson [Spanz](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE HOT TOPIC AT WCC AUCKLAND SUMMIT

By 2037, the world's population is predicted to reach around nine billion. It's also when scientists predict our readily recoverable oil and gas reserves will have run out and the Earth's surface will be more than 2°C warmer, a figure that puts several small Pacific islands at risk.

It's an issue that dominated the recent World Council of Churches (WCC) Pacific churches summit.

Held in Auckland from 14-18 September, the summit was attended by around 32 ministers and lay people from a range of Pacific nations, including Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa and Australia.

The Very Rev Ray Coster, from St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Mount Manganui, is New Zealand's representative on the WCC Central Committee and attended the summit in a supportive role.

"It was a chance to come together to talk about justice and peace in the Pacific region from a Pacific perspective," says Ray.

"The very nature of the vast Pacific and the fact that there aren't a lot of opportunities for people from various islands to get together, means the region is quite siloed. By having this summit, attendees were able to break out of those silos and work together on peace and justice issues in their region."

The hot topic at the summit was climate change and its impact on our Pacific neighbours.

"Some of the issues covered included what people on islands such as Tuvalu and Kiribati are going to do. A combination of rising sea levels and shrinking atolls means they need to think about where they can go if they are forced out of their homes".

Other topics at the summit included the patriarchal leadership of Pacific culture, specifically the women's role in these cultures and the need to work towards greater equality, as well as the church's involvement with legislation changes that affect critical justice and peace issues.

"A key outcome of the summit was the decision to prepare a statement for the 21st United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris in November, so that the Church's voice can be heard."

Two years into his eight-year term as the WCC representative for New Zealand's member churches – Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist – Ray is enjoying the challenge of working towards the WCC's Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.



At the World Council of Church (WCC) Pacific churches summit in Auckland, Luisa Tuilau, pictured, gave an illustrated talk on justice and peace from the perspective of the people of West Papua seeking independence from Indonesia.

"It is an ecumenical journey for people of faith to look for areas where there is darkness and pain in the world where we can work together for justice and peace."

Ray, who has been a minister at St Andrews for 30 years, describes the World Council of Churches as a voice for those without a voice on issues of justice and peace. Some of the issues it shines a spotlight on include poverty, exploitation, migration, human trafficking, climate change, the rights of children and young people, a nuclear-free world, economic justice and global conflict.

The Pilgrimage also aligns with the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly 2014 decision to establish a *Just Peace* programme.

"In my opinion, our Church has lost a lot of its prophetic voice on public issues and international affairs in the last few years. Just Peace is a good way to heed the call of the WCC to work for justice and peace in our communities and the Pacific."

Ray believes the first step in achieving this is to challenge ourselves to be clear about the areas in this part of the world that need justice and peace.

"There are so many issues that arise in the context of justice and peace in our region, from Papua needing to have self-determination to climate change refugees. I hope and I pray that all of us who are part of the Presbyterian Church will decide which issues we want to pick up and how we are going to work towards them."

Ray's next big challenge is working towards the WCC Central Committee meeting, which takes place in Norway in June 2016. He aims to spend between now and then listening not only to Presbyterian churches but also to Methodist, Baptist and Anglican partners to find out the issues that they would like him to raise at the 120-member meeting next year.

"It's our chance for New Zealand's voice on peace and justice to be heard on the global stage and I am very much looking forward in taking those issues to Norway."

Sharon Stephenson Spanz

Inspiring Mission Everyday



Rt Rev Andrew Norton at the Timaru Inspiring Mission workshop.

August can be a time of low inspiration and energy, but this year it marked the beginning of a series of nationwide events designed to put inspiration into the challenges of everyday life and mission.

Following discussions with the Church's Assembly Office ministry team leaders about the need to work more closely with presbyteries, Moderator, the Rt Rev Andrew Norton, expanding on the Inspiring Mission sessions at GA14 came up with a collaborative project to pilot around the country.

Andrew believes that the Church's ministry teams have an abundance of creativity and resources to share, and a common mission to inspire and share tools for equipping people for everyday Christian lives.

Andrew became the keynote speaker for a winter series of Inspiring Mission evenings in the five presbytery regions, with the aim of nourishing a desire within the Church to be recaptured again by the mission of God.

The evenings began with hospitality and a welcome, followed by sung worship led by the Rev Malcolm Gordon, inspiring stories and choices of workshops.

"Individual congregations have become isolated from each other," says Andrew. "Celebrating 'Presbyterian good sorts' is life-affirming and faith-building for our congregations. Churches up and down the country are doing amazing mission in their communities. We need space for them to tell their stories, to help those who are struggling. It's not about copying what others are doing, but rather

hearing their stories and being moved to re-imagine your story in your context."

One of the messages that Andrew has shared has particularly touched people. The church's symbol of the burning bush comes from Exodus 3, in which Moses had an encounter with God that changed everything. "I believe we desperately need an encounter with God," Andrew says. "Bring on the burning bush."

That call-to-action has been shared along the east coast of both islands – in Napier, Hastings, Gisborne, Christchurch, Timaru and Dunedin. Inspiring Mission has also visited Rotorua, Tauranga, Nelson and Invercargill.

An Auckland mini-series at Greenlane, called Everyday Matters, ran over three weekday nights and was attended by around 70 church members and staff.

"It brought together the best of what we can offer," says Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership Auckland coordinator the Rev Mark Johnston. He and wife the Rev Dr Caroline Kelly led a workshop on relating in neighbourhoods.

"We want to equip people for when the rubber hits the road. So often we try too hard to do things and could put more emphasis on being, so that living comes out of the heart of being with Christ. People's issues are complex today, but Christ is present in these challenges."

Anne Overton works at the coal face of social justice, child poverty and family violence at Presbyterian Support Northern. Her workshop on Justice and Action offered congregations practical

ways of understanding the everyday lives of those who are struggling.

"We need to meet God where he is, where the work is at," she says. "I empower people to find ways to step up and help these people rebuild their lives. Conversation is where it starts, and that was a key message."

The small group format of the workshops encouraged people to open up and share, and the Justice and Action workshop was well attended by Chinese church members exploring how to "do" church in the city, and work with homeless people.

Being in partnership with a team is a welcome experience for Kids Friendly Coach Jill Kayser, whose focus was on bringing families together and doing church differently in secular New Zealand. "It's hard being a lone operator at times. Along with having a united front on a common mission, we all bounce off each other and share tasks. Andrew's gift is his ability to draw people together, and I hope future moderators take on this approach."

"All of those involved with the inspiring mission series have similar hearts to help churches see what potential they have to engage creatively with the wider community," says Anne. "All churches need to be inspired and challenged. Some are just beginning a journey, some are well advanced and have stories to share, while others are yet to discover a new pathway."

Further Inspiring Mission sessions are possible, following a review of this year's series.

Jade Reidy [Spanz](#)

Korean trip insightful for future ministry

A visit to a Korean theological training institution was an eyeopening experience for Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership intern, David Kim.

David, 31, accompanied Moderator, the Rt Rev Andrew Norton, and Asian Ministries Co-ordinator, the Rev Kyoung-Gyun Han, to Korea in September. Andrew had been invited to address delegates at the Ecumenical Forum on Peace in Northeast Asia conference initiated by the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK).

David accompanied Andrew and Kyoung to various meetings, but spent most of his nine-day visit at the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary (PUTS).

“Though regrettably short, this experience has left an indelible mark on my theological formation,” he says.

David describes how the visit has helped him to understand the importance of culture and context.

“The visit helped me to face the weight of the reality that spirituality is not lived out in some universal way common to every human being, but is expressed by and through the location of social, cultural, and natural environment of the people.

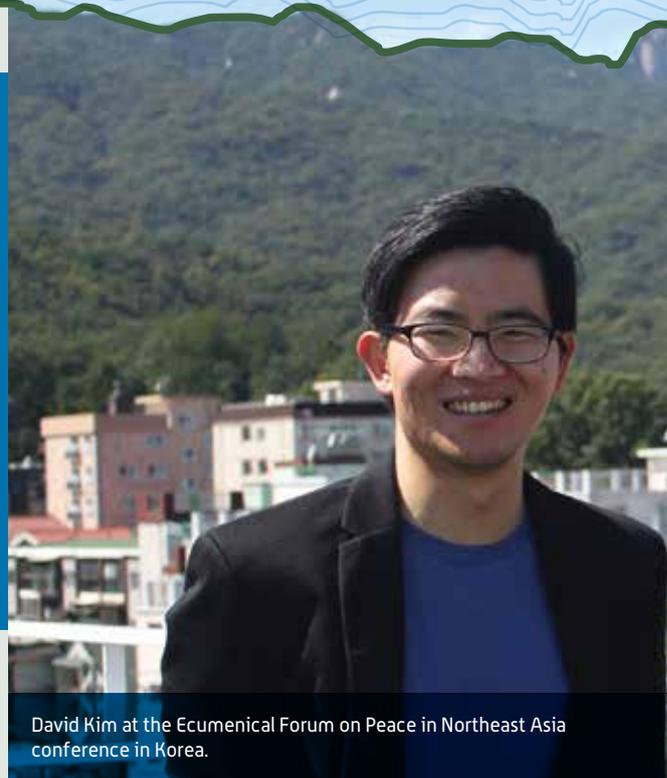
“I came to realise the impact it [context] can have in challenging the deep-seated assumptions and what is considered the norm in one’s country and church.”

David tells an anecdote about how a walk with PUTS Professor Han Kook-il led him to consider his theology more deeply.

“As we went for a walk up the street, Professor Han lamented the existence of houses and building sites that seemed discordant with the environment. Western-style houses had been cut into the mountains; they stuck up concrete walls; they looked modern. They were ugly set against the very Korean environment of rolling green hills.

“But then we saw another house – old and Korean in structure and style. It blended in seamlessly, harmoniously with the mountains and the rice fields. There seemed to be a natural harmony and respect between the house and the surrounding environment. Unlike the self-assuming structures of the West, this house seemed to be a natural part of the environment.

“What if our theology was the same? Could it be that when Western theology is set against the rolling mountains of Korea,



David Kim at the Ecumenical Forum on Peace in Northeast Asia conference in Korea.

it is ugly? What if we were to do a theology that blends with the rolling mountains and rice fields? How would we do it?”

David hopes that the insights from his visit will help him to appreciate Christian spirituality expressed in diverse ways by different peoples, and enable him to help others to find ways that are enriching for their culture.

David became involved in the trip, which he funded himself, as a result of encouragement from Kyoung.

“Rev Han wisely said knowing the church who gave birth to me will be of benefit to the church who has adopted me,” explains David.

He was energised by the sheer number of staff and students at PUTS as well as the size of the campus, which covers 16 acres and is located on the slopes of the Acha Mountain in eastern Seoul. PUTS is the one of the biggest and most well-resourced seminaries in the world with around 80 PhD professors.

Impressed by the breadth and diversity of the teaching available at PUTS, David took advantage of the opportunity to interact with students, meet teachers and attend lectures.

“I was astounded by the possibility of research into the theology of play, which Rev Dr Park Jae Pil specialises in. In our conversation, he spoke of the important and essential link between work and play in Korean culture.”

Kyoung facilitated the invitation for David to visit PUTS because he believed David would benefit from it.

“He has sharp eyes to reflect from what he sees and learns. David is a theologian. For the future of the Presbyterian Church here in New Zealand, we need more leaders like David, who can make a bridge and network with theological resources.”

Having lived in Auckland since he was 11, David moved to Whakatane in the Bay of Plenty to take up his internship last year. After his graduation in December, he intends to move back to Auckland and complete his Masters in Theology, which he had started before becoming an intern.

Josephine Reader [Sanz](#)

Creative expression of Gospel of Luke

The Illustrated Gospel Project calls on artists to give their creative interpretations of passages from the Gospel of Luke.

The idea for the project came to the Rev Malcolm Gordon after hearing the Rev Dr Steve Taylor speak at the PressGo Offspring gathering a couple of years ago.

“He showed a piece of artwork from an Armenian artist from centuries ago, depicting Luke 18,” recalls Malcolm. “In the picture was someone wearing a strange hat — the person was Mongolian. Mongolians were the Armenians’ sworn enemies at this time in history, and I found his inclusion in the painting inspirational. It made me think that it would be great to take the Gospel of Luke today and see what creative people could come up with.”

When Malcolm took up the newly created KCML Worship, Music and Arts Enabler position last year, he was keen to see whether the idea had traction. So he recruited a group of more than 20 artists, musicians and writers from across New Zealand to participate in the project.

“It’s quite a creative community we’ve got going, though they’ve never been in the same room together, which is one of the quirky things about the project,” he says.

“Once the group was established, we mapped out what we’d cover. We chose 12 key passages — universal Jesus stories like the Good Samaritan.”

The artists then set to work creating contextual paraphrases, artworks and songs around each story, explains Malcolm.

Songwriter Hannah Gibson, a music student at Otago University and member of the StudentSoul church, is one of the collaborators on the project.

“I’d never before considered crossing the boundary between my music and my faith.

“Realising I could write Christian songs that people might want to sing in church was a revelation. It made me think about my faith more. I’m having a fantastic time with the project, and hope it becomes a resource for any church in New Zealand that wants it; a homegrown thing for our churches. I’ve already introduced a couple of songs to my own church.”

Adrian Taylor is a strawberry farmer and contemplative poet based in Katikati who has been involved since the project’s inception.

“The work really energises me and I’m happy to be along for the ride,” he says. “I’m most excited to see what the other artists have done — it blows my mind to see what has come out of something quite small.”

Adrian translated the Good Samaritan.

“I would sit for a long time with the scripture while working on the paraphrases. It created a licence to meditate on what the spirit might be saying through this. Just dwelling on a scene, it surprised me where my meditations would end up.



An artwork depicting Jesus’ birth by Sophia Plate which appears in the resource.

“It’s so familiar and universal that we miss what the first hearers might have heard. So I decided to keep the Samaritan’s identity anonymous for as long as possible in the paraphrase, and that focus gave it a shape I never intended. What Jesus was trying to tell the scholar became totally evident, and it became clear that Jesus was for the scholar too,” he says.

Rebecca Phillips, Youth and Children’s Worker at Miramar Uniting church in Wellington, is one of the visual artists working on the project.

“I worked around the paraphrases that people had written to create my illustrations,” she says. “It really helped me to see the passages in a new way I’d not experienced before. There were lots of people coming together with different viewpoints. I’ve definitely dug deeper into my faith and my art practice as a result.”

The works created as part of the project have been put into a booklet and CD and are being distributed to churches around the country in November, in time for the start of the 2016 lectionary cycle. A website has also been created to host the works at www.illustratedgospel.org

“I hope the book won’t be the end of it,” Malcom says. “It’s an extraordinary collection in itself, but I’d like us to develop a living catalogue from Aotearoa, a witness of how God is at work here. We’re usually so dependent on outside voices. We haven’t done artistic work like this before in our neighbourhood, and my hope is that it keeps a conversation going between communities.”

Kate Davidson Spanz



New Zealand minister heads CWM



Very Rev Pamela Tankersley

The Very Rev Pamela Tankersley is the new Moderator of the Council for World Mission.

“Sitting in Palmerston North as chair of this large trust operating all round the world is an astonishing experience,” says Pamela, who was elected to the role when the previous Moderator resigned unexpectedly in August.

“The other day we had a Council for World Mission meeting by Skype. The General Secretary was in London, the PA organising the call was in Malawi, the Corporate Secretary was a Phillippino lawyer working in Singapore – and I was in Palmerston North.”

But the role also involves a lot of travel: “Next month I’ll be in Madagascar. Last month I was in Hong Kong and Singapore. I have been in Jamaica this year and have been twice to Papua New Guinea.”

Pamela describes the CWM as “a family of churches that unites across the globe to work together in mission”.

When she adds that the global mission movement is the successor to the London Missionary Society, there is often instant name recognition because of the role played by the LMS in New Zealand and the Pacific in the nineteenth century New Zealand. “That’s the background, but it operates today in a post-colonial style of mission.”

There are 32 churches in the CWM from 40 countries. Our Church and the Congregational Union of New Zealand are the two New Zealand members of CWM, and the council has a director from each of the member churches.

Pamela was elected to be the Presbyterian Church director on the executive of the CWM and deputy moderator for the Pacific Region in 2012.

She describes her new role as being “chair of the board” as the CWM is funded from a large trust fund which is disbursed to projects all over the world.

“But it isn’t just about making grants. It’s actually about mobilising people to work together,” says Pamela.

“For example, in New Zealand we have a mission partner who is funded by our Church, the Presbyterian Church of Korea and CWM to work with Asian congregations in this country. That’s the sort of thing the CWM enables – the sharing of people and financial resources in order to do mission together.”

“A lot of our work is in the developing world. But we are on a level playing field. The church members in well-developed and developing countries have equal status in the organisation. It used to be that churches in Britain were givers. Now it is mission from everywhere to everywhere.

“Our emphasis at the moment is on helping build missional congregations – which is totally in line with our priorities as a Church.”

Pamela was ordained in 1988 and has served as a parish minister in three parishes for over 20 years. She is married to Roy and they have three adult children and four grandchildren.

She has been an advocate for full participation of women in the church and society, and has represented Presbyterian Women at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women three years running.

She was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in 2006.

Asked what drew her to the CWM Moderator role she is straightforwardly modest: “I know how to moderate. If I do have a skill it is that – making sure everybody gets heard and getting through in a timely fashion with clarity. Whatever moderators do, I can do it.”

She is particularly keen to use those skills both internationally and ecumenically, and says it was on the general committee of the Christian Conference of Asia from 2005 to 2010 that she learnt the skills of working with the different church traditions and in different parts of the world.

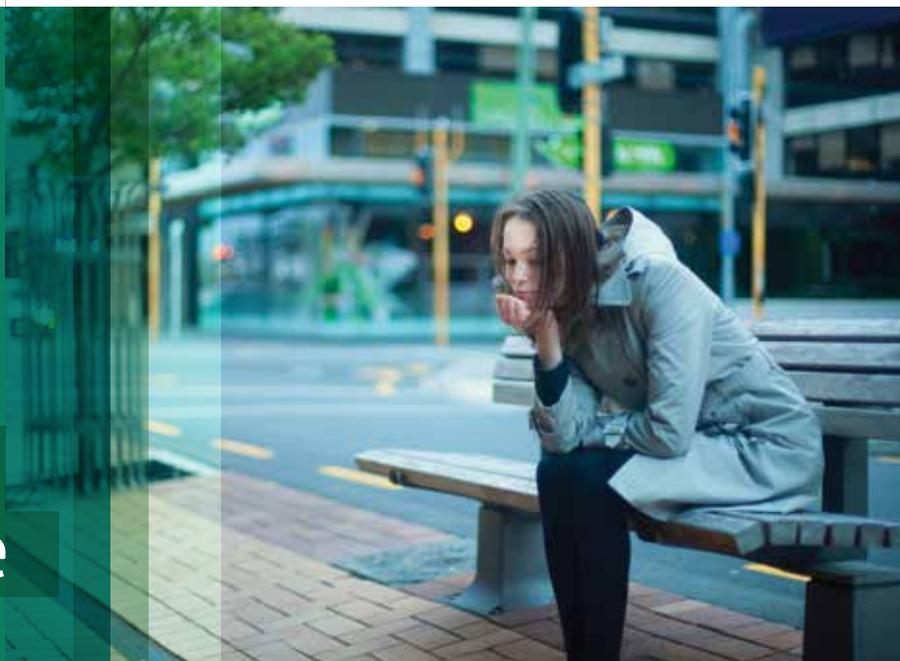
These are key skills in her new role.

“In the CWM we work in English. But one of the fascinations to me is a chairing meeting where there are people around the table from India, Jamaica, Malawi and Myanmar whose versions of English are very different, and how quickly we all settle in to listening and understanding each other in what we call ‘ecumenical English’ – familiarising with each other’s idiom and speech to work well together.

“It’s my job as Moderator to make sure everybody understands each other.”

Jade Reidy [@spanz](#)

Trust supports youth transition to independence



New Zealand has the lowest state care leaving age in the English-speaking world. While young Kiwis leave home on average at 23, vulnerable 17-year-olds leaving care are expected to cope on their own, against all odds.

While a government review of Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS) may look to raise that age and increase support services, Dingwall Trust in South Auckland has already stepped up to meet this need.

Nine years ago, Dingwall Trust, formerly Dingwall Presbyterian Orphanage Trust Board, added a new programme to its existing family-style residential care for children. Called "Care to Independence", it offers youth-led, community-based support for 15-20 year-olds. Each young person leaving care gets a personal adviser, supported boarding in a flat and other practical help to make the transition to independence.

"We started the programme because we had concerns that support was getting thinner and thinner over time," says Chief Executive Tracie Shipton. "When we looked over Dingwall's 85-year history of stepping in where parents are unable, we have always been a place that offered support and gives what most parents would want for their own kids – a nurturing environment."

New Zealand is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention says that anyone under 18 is a child. Dingwall, along with other social agencies, consider that ending placements at 17 is inconsistent with our obligations under the Convention.

Research from Monash University in Australia also shows that each 17-year-old who leaves state care can cost the state more than \$700,000 due to poor outcomes that include homelessness, justice and correction costs, being young parents, and long-term welfare dependence. In New Zealand, 83 percent of prison inmates under 20 have a care and protection record with CYFS.

Last year, New Zealand had 4,034 young people in care placements. That figure will rise if the care leaving age is raised to 21, as Tracie expects to happen when the CYFS review panel tables its recommendations to Government in late 2015. Tracie sees this as a "quick win" and has other aspirational goals for vulnerable young people.

"These young people don't have the option to come home if something goes wrong. I'd like to see every young person have their first university degree funded and be offered social housing," she says. "They need solid support to reduce the stigma attached to being raised in care. This prejudice affects their ability to get accommodation and employment, which are critical to independence."

At 17, children leaving care are not eligible for Housing New Zealand homes. Once they do turn 18, they are caught in the waiting lists and are not seen as a priority group, says Care to Independence programme manager Sarah Ashton. They fall through the gaps, with no way back and viable pathways forward, she says.

At 20 and newly graduated from the programme, Kellie now sees how vulnerable she was.

"What many young people leaving care don't realise is that once you're discharged you can't go back.

"Most 17-year-olds think of the freedom and liberties that come with being independent, but fail to recognise the responsibilities and financial pressure of living independently. It escapes us whether we can feed ourselves, how we will make rent the next week, how we will afford to go the doctors and just how alone we can end up being."

Preparation should begin from 15 onwards, says Tracie, and be individualised according to need, as Dingwall's Care to Independence programme is. Despite the need for a formalised national programme, she believes that the Government is unlikely to get it right on its own. Partnering with social providers is a better recipe for success.

Last year alone, Dingwall Trust set up 18 new flats for care leavers. They were equipped through an initiative of St Kentigern Girls' Presbyterian School, called The Sharing Shed. Students and staff donate bedding, pots and pans, cutlery, crockery, appliances, whiteware and furniture to offset the very expensive task of setting up home.

Dingwall has also joined with the multi-agency campaign and petition called "We don't stop caring at 17". The campaign aims to present 10,000 or more signatures to the Social Services Select Committee. To sign the petition go to <http://www.actionstation.org.nz/wedontstopcaring>

For more information about the Dingwall Trust, go to www.dingwall.co.nz

Jade Reidy Spanz



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THEOLOGYMATTERS

Becoming a community of discernment

A comment by our Moderator, the Rt Rev Andrew Norton, at a Presbytery Central event last month, helped to draw a number of significant threads together for me.

He had recently visited the General Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia who see their sole task as "seeking to discern the will of God". Andrew went on to say that we do not have a culture of discernment in our Assembly; we have a culture of making decisions. It was as if a light went on for me about a culture change that we need to make at every level of our life.

Recently I have been asked to do a few sessions with parish leadership groups (sessions, councils, boards) about how they operate. I think we are all aware that many of our churches are crippled by conflict and personality clashes within their leadership. So I begin by asking, "What is the role of the elders in the life of a church?" Eventually we get to the point where they agree on something like "overseeing the 'spiritual' life of the church". This puts the focus on it being God's church, and their task together is to discover (discern) what God's will is for them; to be able to say as did the elders in Acts 15: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us".

So, to begin by sharing around scripture and praying before we start our real business becomes not simply a necessary ritual, but the necessary foundation in everything we do. Just as with the Assembly, however, the focus becomes on making decisions, agreeing on plans, setting priorities. Often it is simply a battle over whose agenda, personal convictions or pet projects are going to win.

A major part of my own focus over recent years has been around what it means to be a missional church. This phrase is used repeatedly in every level of our church,

but to what extent has it led to us actually becoming missional? Often I think that many who use this expression have no idea of what it really means. The term comes out of an understanding about God: that God is a missionary (sending) God. To redeem all of creation, including humanity, the Father sent the son into the world, then together they send the Spirit, and finally our triune God sends the Church to join with them in God's mission of redemption.

As one writer puts it, "It is not that the church has a mission in the world; but that the God of mission has a church in the world." God is already active in mission in the world, and the task of the Church at every level is first to seek to discern what God is doing in the world, in their community, and then how it is that God is calling them to partner with God in it.

This is the task of discernment that needs to precede every decision that we make as God's people in our world today. Our failure to really be aware of this, and to develop a culture that embraces and operates out of it, is the critical thing that is holding us back - not money, or resources, or buildings, or having the right ministers, or the best programmes, but our inability to form our communal life around the right focus.

We must discern together who it is that God is calling us to be, and what it is that God is calling us to do in this place as God's people. Interestingly, I have recently discovered that we have known this for some time, when our new Principal, Steve Taylor, drew my attention to a 1990 booklet from the Mission Resource team: *Finding God's Way for Our Parish: Principles and Methods of Communal Discernment*.

– Rev Dr Kevin Ward, Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Dunedin.

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Kick-starting mission with help from Press Go



Press Go is working hard on its task to strengthen the missional foundations of the Church.

Since its inception in 2008, Press Go has invested \$1.6m in 14 projects. The fund is about building leadership capacity and helping parishes to realise dreams that will see a broader change in the church, says Catalyst Lisa Wells.

One recent project supported by Press Go is a pilot discipling programme, 3DM.

Miramar Uniting parish's Rev Dr Paul Prestidge had serendipitously been investigating the global 3DM initiative before Lisa suggested running a pilot within the Presbyterian Church. 3DM was first picked up in New Zealand by the Anglican Church, and the programme's holistic framework helps Christian churches navigate a culture change from congregations as passive consumers to engaged disciples inspired by missional leaders.

"The traditional view of a faith community has hobbled churches," asserts Paul. "We need a new, replicable model with its own grammar for what it means to hear God."

Paul is one of a "huddle" of five ministers around the country forming a learning community for this new model.

"We wanted to be effective evangelists but didn't know how to get to where we wanted to be," he says. "Lisa's support gave us confidence and also the legitimacy to tap into additional funding sources."

Alongside inspiring mission, Press Go facilitates all aspects of strategic planning. Presbytery Central clerk Gene Lawrence experienced the Press Go magic when his own church, St David's undertook an organisation audit.

"It's a process that's well worth it," he affirms, "not because Lisa and the team are saying something new, so much as asking pertinent questions that help us see what the future could look like. They're a valuable outside perspective."

Talking about the results of the audit with parishioners is also creating a conversation that engages the whole church.

Alpine Presbytery clerk Barry Ayers agrees that the greatest challenges for parishes are in seeing new ways forward and translating vision into practical reality.

"Lisa's a great resource. We made sure she was profiled early on in the presbytery process," he says. "Our role is to make her presence known so parishes can connect directly with her."

The wider Press Go team can also help churches with seeking external funding, partnerships and other revenue-generating ideas. Partnership is a pivotal word for Mackenzie Co-operating parish, which has a small population base but worldwide fame because of its historic Church of the Good Shepard on the shores of Lake Tekapo, which is visited by thousands of people from across the globe each year.

Although they have their hands full with tourists, the Rev Andrew McDonald says it's equally important to engage with the local community and grow the resident population. Families don't move to Tekapo because there is no preschool education available. The nearest early learning centre is 45km away in Fairlie.

A year ago, Andrew initiated a conversation with Press Go about how best to use an empty section it owned at Lake Tekapo, to develop a community preschool.

"The old church hall was used by a playgroup and there was a lovely overlap between the playgroup and the church committee," he explains. "We wanted to get a feel for what kind of structure would best suit our situation, and avoid the more expensive ideas."

The new centre could start next year as an innovative mobile kindy three mornings a week, provided by South Canterbury Kindergarten.

"We recognise we need to let go and trust others," he says, "rather than tie up this land. It's about authentic partnership."

To get in touch with Press Go, contact Lisa Wells at lisaw@presbyterian.org.nz or on 027 4455 723.



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Northern youth deliver acts of kindness

The last month of winter perked up for some lucky people in the Northern Presbyterian region, as they enjoyed acts of kindness delivered by some of the region's youth groups under the auspices of Project Co-op.

Five youth groups took up the challenge this year, says Emma Page, Youth Coordinator, Northern Presbyterian, who helped match groups with recipients when needed. The community outreach project runs alongside Presbyterian Support Northern during the month of August.

Baking was the clear favourite.

The fire crew at Pitt Street Fire Station were the fortunate recipients of home baking over August, thanks to the culinary efforts of their close neighbours, the Auckland Chinese Presbyterian Church youth group.

"The timing of Project Co-op was perfect," says Celia Wong, as it coincided with the group's church service theme for August – 'serving God right where we are, right now'.

"While many had baked before and were keen as mustard, one of our girls is dairy and egg intolerant, so it was a fun and eye-opening experience using different ingredients. Who knew you could use ground flaxseed and water instead of eggs? Or just how difficult is it to cream sugar and coconut oil, and whether it would really work?"

"While everyone enjoyed the taste testing – just to make sure that the biscuits were good enough to give away –, the definite highlight was being able to visit the fire station," says Celia.

On the last weekend of August, young people from St John's Presbyterian Church in Papatoetoe produced and delivered chocolate chip and shortbread cookies for some of the elderly and unwell members of their parish and local retirement village.

"We had just launched our junior youth programme and it was quite fitting that our second ever session was based



The Pitt Street Fire Station staff in central Auckland were very grateful for the batch of baking from the Auckland Chinese Presbyterian Church youth group, from left Avery, Sarah, Nathan (leader), Shirley, Ginny (seated), Pitt Street Station fireman, Matthew, and Lidia.

on Project Co-op," says Angela Tagaloa, St John's youth group leader. "Those involved thoroughly enjoyed it and really took to heart the idea of serving others as being a central part of our Christian faith."

The same weekend, the youth group from St Andrew's Centre in Waiuku baked and delivered cakes and slices to the residents and staff at a local rest home.

"We had a lot of fun baking together with some good conversations of how important it is as Christians for us to serve others in the community," says youth group leader, Joseph Martin.

Meanwhile across town, it was back to grass roots for a small team from Somervell Presbyterian Church's youth group in Remuera. The sextet cleared and dug the vegetable garden of a local elderly gentleman in preparation for his spring planting. The recipient, who had been suggested by Enliven as someone who would welcome a hand, was extremely grateful.

"None of us were experienced gardeners but made up for that with extreme enthusiasm and dedication," says Iona Robinson. "It was a great day for youth group bonding and giving back to our local community."

Shoppers and others milling around Auckland's Westgate Shopping Centre came in for some unexpected love-bombs – home-baking, chocolates, and flowers – from Massey Presbyterian

Church's youth group on 28 August via the annual "Love this City" campaign.

"Many people were blown away by these random acts of kindness and the youth also learned the blessing of giving," say group leader Grant Ridout.

Anne Overton, the Community Advocate at Presbyterian Support Northern emphasises the value of Project Co-op – launched as an afternoon venture four years ago – as a way of boosting understanding across generations through acts of kindness.

"It is a great way for young and older people to share ideas and understand the differences in the generations," Anne says. "The young people have a better understanding of what it is like to be older and not as able to do things. For the older people it is an opportunity to get to know young people, enjoy a different style of conversation, share stories, and appreciate each other. Our Enliven clients are always delighted to have the young people helping them."

The project is evolving. Last year the afternoon of good will was extended to a month and the recipients now span the generations.

Emma Page is delighted with this year's response. She's looking forward to seeing what comes up at next Project Co-op, but in the interim, encourages "youth groups to continue to serve in their local communities, even though August has now come to an end."

Joan Begg [Spanz](#)

YOUTH WORKER

If there was a crown for the busiest woman in New Zealand, it would currently be on Jo Kisona's head.

Not only is the 38-year-old mother to daughter Eden (1) and three-year-old twins, Olga and Judah, she also works full-time for Child, Youth & Family as the residence manager of a 20-bed unit for vulnerable youth in Lower Hutt.

And if that wasn't enough, Jo also co-heads up the Youth Ministry at the Pacific Island Church of Christ the King (PIC) in Cannons Creek, Porirua, managing programmes for around 30-40 youth from different denominations.

So how does this superwoman do it all?

"With huge amounts of family support," she laughs, especially from extended family and her builder husband, Tito.

"We also include our kids in almost everything we do. If we've got a youth event, we'll bring them along with us if we can," says Jo.

It's probably no surprise that Jo's life has followed this path. Her family has a long history of working in the caring professions and while growing up, Jo says she was taught that if someone needs help, you help them.

"My father was always helping new arrivals from the Islands and it was natural to us to share what we had. If you have a car, then find out who needs a lift and give them one. If you have food, then see who is hungry. That's the way we were brought up and that's the message I hope to pass onto my children."

After finishing high school at St Mary's in Wellington, Jo moved to Dunedin to study law at Otago University.

But part-way through her degree, she realised that God was asking her to move in another direction.



**A GIFT TO
HER COMMUNITY**

Jo Kisona was a keynote speaker at Connect 2011.

"I'd always been in the Church but in 1997, I really started listening to what God wanted for me."

That turned out to be a degree in consumer applied sciences, focusing on social work and child psychiatry (non-medical) that Jo completed in 1999.

While attending Elim Church in Dunedin, Jo juggled her studies with setting up a youth group. At its peak, the group had around 50 members, drawn from various denominations. It's something she believes strongly in.

"Growing up, my wider family would talk about 'one church', about it not mattering which church you identified with. One church means coming together to worship together and that's something that we practice at the PIC youth group today."

After moving back to Wellington, Jo's desire to help others kicked into overdrive and she has since worked with everyone from vulnerable youth to sex offenders.

"I love working with people that society sees as hopeless and useless. That's where I think I can make the greatest difference."

The Auckland-born Samoan/Tokulean says the biggest reward is seeing the light go on for a young person.

"So many young people think that they're not worth anything, that they're a waste of space. And then you work with them and you see them thinking 'maybe I have got something to contribute' and that,

for me, is the pay-back. It's my purpose to help a young person understand that they're worth something."

Jo has been an active member of the PIC youth and young adult ministry for the last decade and says she "has a real heart" for youth work, particularly in helping to stem the tide of young people leaving the Church.

"There's so much we could do to help retain our young people and that's where my passion is. It's about making the church youth-friendly, working with our young people to get them involved with the community and to see their value in helping others."

"Lens on Generosity" was one of the programmes successfully initiated by Jo which focused on paying it forward.

"We helped clean people's homes, with the objective that having a clean house would lead to better physical and mental health. We also ran free school holiday programmes to help give parents a break."

Jo also found time to get involved with Connect, being a keynote speaker at the 2011 event.

As for the future, this dynamo plans to keep on giving back and one day she and her husband would love to open their own foster home.

"We'd love to foster about four kids at a time, especially the vulnerable kids that no-one else wants. We're praying for the right time to do this."

Sharon Stephenson **Spanz**



Good book guides mission team's Vanuatu library

Christchurch couple Graeme and Maebry Reid didn't let Cyclone Pam distract them from their missionary work with school children in Vanuatu – in fact, experiencing it first-hand made them all the more determined to stay on.

The Reids got involved in Vanuatu after Global Mission Coordinator the Rev Phil King visited their church, St Margaret's in Bishopdale. "He asked Graeme whether we were interested in mission in Vanuatu, and we went away to pray and think about it," says Maebry.

Around that time, the couple spent eight weeks volunteering at a church in Motueka, where they met people from Vanuatu working as pruners in the orchards.

"When God wants you somewhere he keeps knocking on your door, and we eventually opened the door and said yes," says Graeme.

In February, the Reids headed to Onesua College to help students with reading and English. But only eight weeks into their placement, Cyclone Pam ripped through the school. Most of the older staff housing and student dormitories were damaged or roofless.

"Our guesthouse was left reasonably intact, so we returned to Port Vila on the first available bus and gave our house back to the Onesua Principal so he could continue running the school," recalls Maebry.

In Port Vila the Reids were introduced to Principal Daniel of Seaside Community School. "The school is in a very poor area, and we saw that the reading levels really needed improvement," says Graeme.

So the couple decided to stay on and continue their good work. They were



Maebry Reid helps struggling readers at the Seaside Community School, Port Vila.

assigned to help 10 to 12 struggling readers from years two and three.

"We have two classes of renegades, hyperactive and dyslexic children, who, if left in classes of 37 children, would not pass the exam in year 8 to go to high school," says Maebry.

To successfully teach these children, they turned a large room built for woodwork classes into a library and classroom, with the help of an Australian work team. Three other couples helped finish the room and fit book shelves, as well as sorting, unpacking and recording donated books.

"We now have a model library, with many interesting books suitable for struggling readers," says Graeme. "Sarah and Ruth, two local ladies, will continue on in the library when we go."

The couple has also launched a Saturday morning adult class in conversational English, and Principal Daniel plans to use the building for other classes like sewing, cooking, and local crafts, which are useful for students who leave school after year 8.

Graeme and Maebry intend to return home at the end of the school year. In the ten months they've spent in Vanuatu, they say the most rewarding experience has been observing the slow readers' progress.

"When we thought we were getting nowhere, suddenly they'd connect," says Maebry. "Half of it was in the

trusting relationships, fostering kindness between us. God's loving care for every child became evident as we pushed through each lesson."

The biggest surprise was seeing a child who had trauma at birth, and who never used her voice, starting to talk and laugh, says Maebry.

"She's a sweet little treasure, and has taught us many things about Jesus restoring the weak and lonely.

"On our walk from her classroom to the library, she sometimes shares her week with me. She also goes to Sunday School, and her face lights up when you talk about Jesus. She is attracted to all the beautiful Christian books people have given us, and loves to make up her own stories.

"What I will take back in my spirit will be the experience of working with a team of dedicated, passionate servers of Christ.

"We've seen how God loves each of God's children individually, passionately and radically. Like thousands of seeds in a pod, we're gathered together for a season, then dispersed by the wind of the Holy Spirit, each with the potential to grow a tiny new life. Our hope is to see these seeds grow into next year's crops, and a harvest of honest, caring and kind people who will lead the nation of Vanuatu with the love of God in their hearts."

Kate Davidson [Spanz](#)



Young global leaders on mission to learn

This year's Training in Mission (TIM) programme saw 12 young people from around the world spend three months in New Zealand learning about different cultures and contributing to church and community projects.

"TIM has been running for 30 years," says Global Mission Coordinator the Rev Phil King. "We've hosted students in New Zealand for the past three years. It's a formation programme, and an investment in the leadership potential of the young people who take part."

The 12 students, who hail from countries including Guyana, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the UK, and Samoa, spend nine months living away from home on the programme, including five months in Taiwan and one month in Kiribati, with the final three months in New Zealand.

The students were initially based at Laidlaw College in Auckland, where they attended lectures on mission and theology. They also undertook full-time voluntary work in church and community service programmes.

Kim Lockwood is TIM's Auckland Coordinator — it was her role to look after the students while they were in Auckland and make sure everything worked out with their placements.

The group's main focus was on helping low socio-economic families. They went to the local food bank and assisted with preparing food parcels. "They talked to the person there about why there are homeless people in New Zealand," says Kim. "Some of them hadn't believed it was possible that a country like New Zealand could have homeless."

They also attended Crosspower, an alternative education and youth mentoring programme for students in Otago. "TIM came on board a couple of years ago, with a tutor who had been



TIM students with the mural they painted for the children's room at Presbyterian Support Family Works in Manurewa. The mural incorporates the flags and images of the student's cultures intertwined with NZ imagery. Anne Overton of Presbyterian Support Northern says the students "have transformed the room and have blessed the many children who will visit and use it in the future".

a TIM student before," says Christine Toomata, Alternative Education Lead Tutor.

"It's a perfect opportunity for the kids to hear about life outside Otago, with the TIM team sharing their cultures and experiences."

Crosspower teaches literacy and numeracy through an op shop, which the young people help to manage.

"The TIM team helped with that, and they really engaged with the young people. First and foremost it's about relationships."

The TIM students also shared their business experiences with the group. One talked about a youth initiative he runs in London. Another described self-help groups in India, where young people who are educated but can't find a job, create jobs, and from there the government gets on board with their ideas.

"Our students are only 14 to 16 years old, but it really helped them to see the opportunities out there and that they could make a difference," says Christine.

"The TIM students found Crosspower a great opportunity to get insight into the challenges of education with lower socio-economic people," adds Phil.

Breakfast clubs at low decile schools were also on the students' agenda, and they helped out at Randwick Park School in Manurewa and Glen Taylor and Glen Innes schools in East Auckland. While there, they assisted with maintenance and upkeep. "They were so good that the schools started asking for them in particular," says Steve Farrelly from the breakfast club programme.

"They attended classes at the schools too, and were a big hit," he adds. "One of the school students is from Kiribati, and so is one of the TIM students, so this was a huge connection. They had a common language."

"The students loved their time here," says Steve. "They really looked forward to coming to the breakfast clubs, and got up very early for it. The response from the children was huge — cuddles from 50 kids was a good start to the day!"

There is plenty of artistic talent in the TIM group, and this was put to good use by Presbyterian Support Northern, as Community Advocate Anne Overton explains.

"The students painted a five-metre mural for the children's room at our Family Works site in Manurewa. It's really



Helping out at the Randwick Park School breakfast club was one of the many service projects the TIM student were involved with while in New Zealand.

beautiful — multicultural, because they each incorporated their own cultures into it, for example adding the sun from the Indian flag.

“Embarking on a huge mural like this is pretty courageous, and we were lucky that they were brave and talented enough to see it through. We were given the paint by a wonderful company called Paint Plus, so it was a very collaborative initiative.”

Among other work for Presbyterian Support Northern the students took part in Project Co-op, going to the homes of Enliven clients, who are elderly or disabled, and digging their gardens and washing their windows.

“One of the ladies phoned to say how absolutely delightful they were. Everyone’s thoroughly enjoyed their company. They’re so fun and engaging.”

To get a taste of Māori culture, the group enjoyed a stay on a marae with Faye Apanui, Administrator for Te Aka Puaho, and her whānau. There they learned about marae protocol, as well as hearing about the Māori prophet Rua and how he connected with the Rev John Laughton.

“On our hākari night, we have a big dinner and everyone talked about their week and its ups and downs,” recalls Faye. “The majority of the students spoke about how welcomed they felt, and how they felt like part of the family. We tried to make a family environment for them, because we knew they were away from their own families. We said to them, ‘Your first night on the marae is just a

welcome, but by the second night you’re part of the family’.

“They really liked the food, and the females appreciated having their own room. My husband, children and grandchildren also went in to share the students’ rooms, so they were all in together.”

“The group has enjoyed such a variety of unique New Zealand experiences,” adds Kim. “They’re exploring different aspects of New Zealand, and they all bring a different cultural perspective. It’s been really interesting to see New Zealand through their eyes. I’ve lived here all my life, and it’s easy to take things for granted and to forget sometimes just how lucky we are to live here.”

The students moved on from Auckland to Wellington for the final month of their New Zealand trip. “I was sad to see them go,” says Kim. “They’ve all done incredibly well — they’re a great bunch.”

Waitara Knox Presbyterian Church in Taranaki also hosted the students for a week. They helped out at Momentum, the Presbytery Central gathering that the church was hosting.

They also got a taste of rural Kiwi life with a day trip to Parihaka, Opunake lighthouse and a local farm. “The students saw cows and lambs and even helped with putting the milking cups on,” says Jennie McCullough, Children, Youth and Families Coordinator at Waitara. “They loved it, and it was quite a novelty for them!”

Half of the students then stayed in Opunake with the team from Waitara who run the holiday club there, and the other half stayed with Jennie to work at the holiday club in Waitara.

“The clubs are part of our mission, so it was very relevant for them,” says Jennie. “They worked hard from ten till four each day, and had lots of fun too. They were able to share their culture and their faith, and they were very well received by our young people and children.”

On the last day, there was a celebration for the students.

“It was a hugely inspirational week and a great sharing time,” says Jennie. “The students had inspirational stories to share with us, and we had stories that inspired them too. We really enjoyed having them here.”

“The students had a wide input into general New Zealand life as well as the life of the Church,” says Phil.

“It’s a challenging programme to put together, as you start with a blank slate and you need to fill the whole three months. But we’ve discovered a hidden treasure in terms of personnel — people like Kim, who we found had all the gifts and qualities needed for the coordinator role. The same goes for our Wellington coordinators, and Jennie at Waitara. We’ve seen a great commitment from a lot of people in the Presbyterian Church who have shown real leadership. It’s very encouraging.”

Kate Davidson Spanz



Rebuilding lives in Uganda

There was a time in Kellen's life when she could barely move. Her children cooked the meals and walked the three kilometres to collect water each day while she was too weak to get out of bed. There was no time for school in driest southwest Uganda where they live.

A few months earlier she had lost her husband, a carpenter. Unable to tend their small banana and coffee plantation, it became weedy and produced little. "It was by God's mercy we survived," says Kellen.

Hearing of her plight a staff member from Christian World Service partner, the Centre for Community Solidarity (CCS), visited her. He listened to Kellen describe "the sorry state of affairs of my children with no hope and help". Over time he gently persuaded her to have courage and go for HIV testing.

"I feared to take the advice because if people know you are positive, they can discriminate and isolate you, and associate you with the adultery sins," she recalls. When the test came back, she knew her husband had died of HIV/AIDS.

With treatment, her health began to improve. So when the CCS suggested she join a parish group supporting families of orphaned and vulnerable children to get rainwater tanks, she agreed.

The rainwater tank project is one of many enabled by New Zealanders.

As a member of the Kyabishaho Association, her family's life has been transformed. She meets monthly with 25 other members to share problems and look for solutions. They each contribute 1,000 Uganda shillings (41 cents) to their loan portfolio. CCS trains them in sustainable farming, health and sanitation, HIV/AIDS prevention and water tank construction.

With only a certain number of tanks available, group members use a lottery method to see who wins the most recently completed water tank. Seven years later,



Kellen is developing a soil and water conservation structure.

the members all have tanks and have been trained in their maintenance.

Kellen's six children have gone back to school where their performance has improved. They have established a nursery and sell vegetable, fruit and tree seedlings at the beginning of the rainy season. They also grow some trees for firewood. Saved from the long and sometimes dangerous trek to collect water, the children have time for homework and to help in the nursery.

"Since I joined the Kyabishaho Association, my life and that of my family started changing. The impact this association brought with support from CWS has been so great and has contagiously spread to many communities," says 42 year old Kellen.

CCS works hard to visit the 25 orphans and vulnerable children caregivers' groups like Kellen's. Overall, 720 women are involved in these associations.

Water is very scarce and the need for rainwater tanks continues to be critical. The women build tanks under CCS guidance and CCS also supply the filters.

Since the programme started in May 2008, they have constructed nearly half of the required tanks – 610 have been built and they are anxious for funding to build the remaining 630 that are needed. In addition, CCS has distributed 240 piglets purchased from a Revolving Loan fund

and taught the members how to raise them. With quick money from the sale of pigs, the women can buy clothing, medicine or other basic requirements.

Now more children are attending primary school where there are no fees, but they are unable to proceed to secondary school because of the cost. CCS is setting up youth groups so that young people can earn money for their schooling by building energy-efficient stoves, repairing bikes and phones, plumbing and hairdressing.

Despite their efforts, CCS reports poverty has increased in the Isingiro District. Without their intervention it would be much worse. Charles Rwabambari, one of two CCS staff members, asked CWS to "extend our appreciation to all in New Zealand for this great support".

For 70 years, Presbyterians have supported the annual Christmas Appeal. Family by family CWS gives help through local partners, so that communities are prepared for disaster, livelihoods are improved and people can get back on their feet more quickly.

The first appeal raised funds to rebuild Greece at the close of World War Two.

For more information about this year's Christmas Appeal including a video message from Uganda, posters (multi-language) and Advent resources, visit www.christmasappeal.org.nz



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What your gift will achieve

Legacy gifts of the past have already helped us achieve so much. Some examples include:

- Social services for at-risk young families in some of the most deprived areas of New Zealand
- Research into how to improve dementia care
- Nutritious food items and practical support for emergency foodbanks
- Mentoring programmes for young people.

Family Works walks alongside children and families to help bring positive and lasting changes in their lives.

Our Enliven services enable people to thrive and stay healthy and engaged with their communities. We also offer hands-on support to enable the financially disadvantaged to move from debt to financial independence.

"I feel like our family is saved - that we have a family now."
Helped through Family Works.

Please contact your local bequest manager to discuss leaving a gift in your will.

Presbyterian Support Northern
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Presbyterian Support East Coast
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Presbyterian Support Southland
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include a charity
Help the work live on.



"I have been associated with Presbyterian Support as a supporter over many years, and have followed their work with increasing interest. I am particularly enthusiastic about the amazing work that they are doing out in the community at large, in so many ways."

Supporter who intends to leave a bequest to Presbyterian Support.

www.ps.org.nz



Presbyterian Support