

Northern Presbytery & Presbyterian Support Northern initiative

Communities Feeding Communities: a story about sharing kai

The *Communities Feeding Communities* initiative is a collaboration between Presbyterian Support Northern (PSN) and Northern Presbytery. It has a vision of providing wholistic support to the people of Mt Roskill South, an area of high-density housing with a strong multicultural community.

Communities Feeding Communities is based at the former St Giles Presbyterian Church site on Dominion Rd, Mt Roskill, the grounds of which have been transformed over 2022 into a community garden, allotment gardens, mini orchard and a pātaka kai with further development planned in 2023 for both the grounds and buildings. The vision of *Communities Feeding Communities* is to create a place for the surrounding community to share life, food and faith together.

Key people involved in this initiative are Rev Fa’amanu Akeripa, appointed by Northern Presbytery as the spiritual leader, Grace Mua appointed by PSN as the community coordinator, and Amy Khyriem, also appointed by PSN as the kai transitioner, with ongoing people and financial support provided from PSN and Northern Presbytery.

You can read more about the story behind the *Communities Feeding Communities* initiative here: <https://www.psn.org.nz/seed-of-an-idea-comes-to-reality-two-years-later-in-roskill-south>



Before Christmas, local volunteers, and students from Dilworth School (who regularly help at the garden weeding and planting) planted a huge variety of vegetables. They were supported in this work by Jason, who is employed by PSN at *Communities Feeding Communities* to oversee the garden work for eight hours a week. Jason brings a wealth of knowledge from his experience of creating two other community gardens in the city.

Grace and the garden volunteers have grown artichokes, tomatoes, silverbeet, sage, basil, chives, lettuce, beetroot, zucchini, pumpkin, corn, aubergine, spinach and spring onions, along with edible flowers like marigold and snap dragons...all planted in response to asking the local community what they’d like to see grown in the gardens.

Grace and the local garden volunteers started harvesting the food grown there in late February. Salad bags were made up and put into the pātaka kai, vegetables were given to the volunteers to take home



to their families as well as being given to neighbours. Grace also used some of the produce to make a beautiful meal (pictured) which she and the volunteers shared together.

One of the volunteer gardeners told Grace that previously she had had a very meat-based diet but being involved in the garden has meant that she has started eating a lot more vegetables and is feeling much healthier for it. It’s encouraging to think that growing and sharing healthy food can have a positive impact on someone’s health! Another volunteer who helped in one of the garden working bees was so inspired that she went home, dug up her backyard, and, following advice from the local garden centre, created her own vegetable garden.