

Outstanding stories

Looking for some inspiration? This magazine contains the stories of Presbyterian churches around New Zealand using innovative mission projects to connect with their communities.

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Eating breakfast at church

The Rev Barry Kelk says "Breakfast at the Coronation Hall" on Sunday mornings began as "just regular people with a passion to do church differently". "I literally had a dream where I was shown that I was to drop my nets on the other side of the road." He spent a year talking through the dream with his church (the Highgate Mission), the people who would become the B@TCH team, and Highgate's then-minister the Rev Martin Stewart. Giving it time was really important, Barry says. "If we had rushed off, it if would have not started well." During this time there was a lot of prayer, planning and consultation. After another six months, parish council signed off the project. If they had said "no", Barry says, the project would not have gone ahead; "this cannot be born out

of rebellion." Barry and his family had been part of the church for 50 years.

By giving permission for B@TCH to be planted, Highgate took the risk it would lose key people, but the memberships of both churches have grown and are growing. Initially Highgate paid the cost of hall hire and food for B@TCH, and gave 15 people to be the congregation. "We sent them back in six months." B@TCH was also paying its own way within six months, and sending money back to the "mothership" within a year.

One difference from a conventional church is the lack of formal collection during the service. "We don't have offerings; we just have a bucket at the door." But the generosity of his congregation has surprised Barry.



As well as covering venue and food costs, they have assisted students on missions to a Nelson beach project, Thailand and Nepal for the summer.

Now in its fourth year, B@TCH pays Barry for 13 hours a week. He also runs a photography business and says starting a venture like this inevitably costs at a personal level, in terms of time taken away from paid work. Barry says all the leaders' strong community connections have been vital; people need to be involved, on committees and live in the area. Barry had been on the school's Board of Trustees and taught Bible in schools for many years.

But people are coming from all around the city, he says, which has been somewhat surprising. Another surprise has been the number of young people, including those coming from the two nearby boarding schools. "Rumour has it that some even sneaked out to attend."

The ratio of men to women is 45:55, which is unusually even; and the age range is from babies to 80 years old.

B@TCH is "all age worship the whole time". Its integration of children plus the opportunity to feed them simultaneously has proved a big draw card for people with young families who otherwise find the logistics of Sunday-morning church too hard.

Barry sends an email every Thursday night that gives the text for the service and any

notices, which "cuts down on time wasted during the service". "It is vital that services finish on time so families can plan their day!"

He says they try hard to do everything possible to lessen any tensions people have. Instead of being inside the building, greeters stand in the

is how long they keep B@TCH's seeker-friendly vision going, especially when people in the congregation start to want more meat. Barry says they have committed to maintaining this approach for at least the next year. "I always look to the back door and think if a stranger walked in, would they

"With a cup or plate in hand, it breaks down the barriers"

street and learn people's names immediately. The leadership team have a 12-second rule – one of them must approach a new person within this time. The food is near the door, so that people can spend time picking this up before they need to decide where to sit or who to talk to.

"With a cup or plate in hand, it breaks down the barriers."

Breakfast is "best-ever" fruit salad, cereals, chocolate croissants, bran muffins, fruit and French bread, along with plunger coffee, with all purchasing done fresh on the Sunday morning. "It's not expensive to do if you buy in bulk."

B@TCH spent its first eight months with little or no sung music; then started introducing the familiar hymns people might have sung at school, gradually incorporating new songs.

One question the leadership team has been wrestling with

feel welcome, understand the language and be able to apply it tomorrow."

Meat is supplied in home groups, which include teaching and pastoral care.

B@TCH will probably outgrow its hall within 12 months, Barry says, and he thinks 150 people is probably as big as this type of congregation should get. They've started thinking about what will happen next; perhaps planting something totally new, again in conjunction with Highgate.

Barry has become a Local Ordained Minister and says he has enjoyed the support received from the School of Ministry during his study.

He says one of the most important things about B@TCH is that it's fun. "Humour is a huge part of it; a lot of laughter and a lot of tears."

"Church can be just as worshipful, respectful and meaningful out of pews.

"This thing in the hall is church."



What is it?

Breakfast church at 8.30am on Sundays

Who does it attract?

A diverse group who wouldn't otherwise go to church, and new believers

Where can I find out more?

Check out www.highgatemission.info/39.0.html

What was important starting out?

- ➔ Giving it time
- ➔ Securing approval and blessing from the sending church
- ➔ Forming and developing a leadership team

Free cafe caters for mums

Suspicion of "Bible-bashing" kept initial numbers small, but a cafe ministry that's been running for around seven years now attracts 50-60 women (mostly mothers) plus toddlers every fortnight. The inspiration for Hornby Presbyterian Community Church's cafe came from women's ministry co-ordinator Kate Goodall, who recognised a need in the community for "a real place for people to come". Now, she says, it's grown into "a place of real belonging". Initially set up in the church lounge, the cafe now occupies a purpose-built space at the front of the church. Uniformed waitresses (church members) serve speciality coffees at tablecloth-covered tables, and patrons select homemade cakes, slices or muffins from the counter. It's just like a real cafe, except the customers don't pay, says Kate, who along with a team of committed volunteers works hard to make the cafe experience as real as possible. Kate explains that one of the things that worked well was starting small – around 15 people turned up for the first year – because it provided the opportunity to learn from mistakes and put in place the systems that were needed. Regular volunteer gatherings have also helped maintain the momentum: "We get to hear what everyone's got to say and it's helped them catch the vision – they're not just volunteers," she says.



istockphoto.com/creacart

Support for the cafe has come in many forms – from the local council's financial assistance, to the commitment of volunteers and support from Hornby's congregation and leadership. Kate also attends a network of community organisations to keep in touch with what's going on locally, and what might be of interest to cafe customers. In turn, those organisations – like Work and Income New Zealand, Breast Screening, Smokefree and Inland Revenue Department – come along to the cafe from time-to-time to leave brochures or mingle with customers. Although, the cafe is now running well, the road to building this ministry hasn't been without its challenges. Getting over the suspicion of giving away something-for-nothing and sustaining a supply of volunteers have been among the biggest obstacles, says Kate. When motivation among volunteers was waning, bringing God back into the picture served as great inspiration, she

says. Initially, the team would pray before the cafe opened, but in the busyness of getting things organised, this fell by the wayside for many weeks. Re-starting this pre-opening prayer, where Kate asks God to be present at every table, re-energised the team, so it's important not to let the basics fall away, she says. Watching the softening of hearts toward God is part of the continued inspiration to provide the ministry, says Kate, as is customer feedback. Some even offer to do baking to "return the favour" of the fellowship and coffee they've enjoyed. The focus for next year is to be more intentional about bringing spiritual components to the cafe. So far, she says, it's been about planting seeds, like including Christian verses on table coasters and coffee cups, and advertising church events. The vision for the cafe is to become an "entranceway into a life with Christ".

What is it?

Fortnightly free coffee and cake for locals

Who does it attract?

Mothers from the surrounding area

Where can I find out more?

Kate Goodall, ph (03) 980-2296

What was important starting out?

- ➔ Starting small and learning what works (and what doesn't)
- ➔ A team of committed, enthusiastic volunteers who share the vision
- ➔ Keeping God in the picture

Wairau's gift to Vanuatu

Giving away \$50,000 in Vanuatu has "galvanised" and brought new life to Wairau Presbyterian Parish, says the Rev Ken Williams.

"When people feel as though there's something happening a little bit outside the square, something you can really get your teeth into, they grab hold of it with a bit more passion." Ken says people have felt a strong sense of ownership over the project because of its high visibility both in the parish and in the community. "The biggest bonus has been the level to which it has galvanised us as a parish."

2007 marked Wairau's 50th jubilee so the church started planning well in advance to do something special.

At the end of 2005, they held an "amazing" brainstorming party where people were given permission to bring forward absolutely any idea. "Somebody said, let's give away \$50,000." Ken says while initially a few eyebrows were raised, the project quickly gained momentum and "almost tangible excitement".

Hesitancy about the scale of the amount diminished as funds were seen to grow. Instead of



the village of Utas, on the south east corner of Ambryn, Vanuatu. Vanuatu was attractive in terms of the cost of airfares. Because serving missionary Jon Parkes had previously been part of the parish, he was able to guide them in selecting Utas.

The team going to Vanuatu was chosen very early in the

up a strong team. Most of the money came through donations, gifts and fundraising. They were on track to raise the entire \$50,000 by the end of 2007; in late November the total was \$46,000.

Ken says he found that a lot of work was involved in giving the money away; in terms of creating a partnership and planning, as well as the trip itself in April 2006.

"The prayer support that we had was vital. It's become a major focus of prayer within the parish."

Momentum and enthusiasm have been maintained through regular communication and updates, as well as ongoing special events. For example, Global Mission Enabler the Rev Andrew Bell was the guest speaker at a dinner with the local Tongan community. The local community has got on board, with money donated

"People have gained a sense of purpose about what we're doing"

a thermometer sign, the parish had a palm tree in the church foyer on which the level of donations was measured. They always intended to send the money overseas, and contacted Andrew Bell of the Global Mission Office for suggestions of a suitable project. After a process of prayer and discernment, the decision was made to work with

planning process and began meeting together a year in advance of their trip, guided by a team leader experienced in logistics from work with the army. Team members funded their own travel, with the entire \$50,000 to be spent on the work itself.

Parishioner Margaret Duncan took up the "invaluable" role of fundraising coordinator and built

by Blenheim's two Rotary clubs and considerable support from Marlborough Girls' College and Witherlea Primary school. When they replaced the roof of the church in Utas, Blenheim Mitre 10 donated tools and supplies. The focus of the first trip was this work on the roof of the church, which is the largest community building in Utas. Replacing it meant a more reliable and safe water supply for the people in the village, through the collection of rainwater.

A second trip is planned for April 2008, which has kept the project's visibility high. "People who've come back have been the best ambassadors." Seven of the original team of 10 will be returning for a second time. Ken says they were very conscious that the project was about creating an ongoing partnership, rather than going over and doing things for the ni-Van, and they spent time building relationships as well as working. "It's really important to spend time with people and talk to them." Part of the relationship involves collaboration on which work is most important. The parish has made a long-term commitment to raise \$5000 each year until 2012 for further work with the people of South East Ambryn. Some overtures have also been made to the Red Cross to provide



assistance in overhauling a water system that supplies nine villages because the parish has some people with relevant skills. Ken says the session and board of managers were kept well informed about the progress of the project, which ensured a high level of accountability and prevented any misinformation. One person took responsibility for contacting the media, with the local newspapers taking a high level of interest once they were approached. Six articles were published in 2007, with more to come in 2008.

Ken says the result has been an impressive level of community awareness about what the church is doing, and he has received numerous comments about the project from people unconnected with the church. Ken says the project has been a huge success, going perfectly to plan. "I really don't know that we would do that much differently."

"People have gained a sense of purpose about what we're doing. You can just tell by talking to people that it's made a difference."

What is it?

Generating parish identity and community awareness through a mission project

Who's involved?

Anyone can take part, and those outside the church can be drawn in, with many different roles in a project of this scale

Where can I find out more?

Email wairauparish@xtra.co.nz

What's important for starting up?

- ➔ Start planning very early (there is more detail than you could possibly imagine, especially with the logistics of going to a place as remote as Utas)
- ➔ Liaise with the Global Mission Office
- ➔ Involve as many people as possible
- ➔ Make sure the team meets together regularly well in advance of the trip

Forming healthy habits

Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church Owairaka is promoting a new way of life to its members; one based on healthy eating and exercise. The church's minister, the Rev Ma'afala Koko, had always been someone who played a lot of rugby and tried to maintain a good level of fitness. But in recent years he started to feel concerned about his own health, as well as becoming aware of the scope of health problems in Auckland's Pacific Island community; particularly the rising rate of diabetes. Diabetes is twice as prevalent in Pacific people compared to people from European backgrounds, and 62 per cent of Pacific children aged between 5-14 years are obese. As a result, Ma'afala attended a nutrition course run by the Auckland University of Technology and the Pacific Islands Heartbeat Programme, which is a joint initiative of the National Heart Foundation of

New Zealand and the Ministry of Health. He says it was fascinating to be shown the amount of fat in everyday foods, like fish and chips. "We eat them without knowing how much they are. It really hit me". After Ma'afala had earned his Certificate in Pacific Islands Nutrition, the Heartbeat Programme issued an invitation to churches to pick up the programme and offered funding as long as a monthly report on

They began with a mid-week aerobics class, targeted at "old and young", which has now been running for nearly three years, with the church paying the cost of the trainer. Ma'afala says the younger ones were enthusiastic from the start, and while the older people initially laughed, they soon got involved. Owairaka also ran a healthy cooking and nutrition course, at which tutors from Heartbeat demonstrated healthy recipes

"As others see what we're doing, it's really encouraged them"

spending was submitted. Owairaka formed a health *komiti* and became the 11th Pacific church to join the programme, which started in April 2005. The programme was advertised to the congregation during a Sunday morning service and people were invited to join in.

and meal planning, with people getting the chance to sample the food. Ma'afala says this received very positive feedback and appears to be having a long-lasting effect. Food being brought to communal feasts is changing, with some traditional fattier dishes being replaced by more healthy alternatives. "Less and less fatty meat is seen." He says the leaders on the *komiti* were instrumental in encouraging people to make positive changes and sustain them. Another key driver is people noticing the impact that the changes are having on those making them.

At the beginning, the church held a health screening event for the whole parish, with doctors and nurses present on a Saturday in the church to take blood pressure and other key measurements. Results were followed up with one-on-one visits. Ma'afala says one surprising outcome was that in many cases those who felt they were at risk decided to stay away. But Sunday services are a great opportunity to share the message about the programme, he says, because of the very





high level of attendance in many Pacific communities. Adequate preparation is important for the getting the church on board, he says, particularly in terms of presenting it to the congregation.

The programme has brought people in the church together, he says, with a groundswell of concern about the importance of health. And it has affected those outside the church in terms of being a source of positive role models for the wider community, with people keen to share their new understanding of nutrition, exercise and the benefits in

terms of how they feel. "As others see what we're doing, it's really encouraged them."

In late 2007, the church had just finished running a different District Health Board-funded 12-week programme that covered a number of topics in nutrition and exercise as well as the dangers of smoking, with screening of participants at the start and end of the programme to track its effectiveness.

Ma'afala is moving on to minister at PIC Newton but says having strong leaders on the *komiti* means the programme will be sustained at Owairaka. He is keen to continue working

with Heartbeat at his new parish.

Ma'afala has also been talking to neighbouring ministers, with two coming along to the nutrition course and subsequently signing up their churches for the programme: the Rev Fakaofu Kaio of Onehunga Co-operating Parish and the Rev Talosaga Su'a of Mt Albert Presbyterian.

If churches want to start this kind of programme, Ma'afala says it's really important to be clear right from the beginning why they're doing it. "People really must be aware of why this is important for our lives."

What is it?

Pacific Island healthy eating and exercise programme

Who's involved?

Parishioners are invited to participate and others are also welcome.

Where can I find out more?

More information about the Pacific Islands Heartbeat Programme can be found at: <http://www.pacificheart.org.nz/>

What's important for starting up?

- ➔ Be clear about why you're doing it – the leadership needs to be passionate about it
- ➔ Work with external providers such as the Heartbeat Programme
- ➔ Use the Sunday service to spread the word but also follow up people individually



Students find their soul

The Rev Helen Harray says student church studentsoul "needed to be able to evolve experimentally because there was no blue print to follow."

"It needed a willingness to let it do what it needed to do without any parameters."

She says this age group has unique needs that churches need to address directly. "Don't treat them like youth group and don't homogenise them into the church; don't just leave this group in limbo."

"They're not in the church. Why not? Because they're not being communicated to. Church isn't being done in their language or their culture. Someone has to make some space for them and given them leadership opportunities."

Students who are part of studentsoul say things like "it's a church that has given me a place to ask questions and own my own faith and grow".

The services began in 2002 with a small band of worshippers.

Richard Dawson, minister at Leith Valley Presbyterian, had made some useful connections on campus, which meant they were able to use the student union building. He'd also formed some relationships with some students, giving a critical mass to start the service with.

"Students want to know that they're valued and someone cares about them"

Helen has put a lot of effort into growing leadership skills, through camps away and targeted leadership skills training. In 2007, she ran six camps designed for building community, leadership development and growing spiritually.

She has also spent a lot of time one-on-one with the students.



"Students want to know that they're valued and someone cares about them."

She has had the opportunity to do some counselling "that really set some people free from issues they were struggling with". She says she appreciates being able to work with people at this age before they have complicated their lives with a whole lot of

momentum as it grows in numbers. "The more critical mass you have, the more that you attract people and the more you can do." Two years ago, studentsoul had a solid core of leaders and was able to put on a musical and take services at other churches. That core also it grew its own social activities and culture.

There will be a critical mass of 40 leaders in 2008. In 2007, these young people produced a promotional DVD, designed to spread the message to those heading to study in Dunedin. Helen says one of studentsoul's roadblocks came in year three when she didn't have enough help; something that has become apparent in retrospect. It was difficult to put enough energy both into growing the established community and into attracting new younger students. The result was that fewer younger students

decisions, and hopefully give them some life skills in the context of spirituality. Because of the nature of the university cycle, in a sense Helen starts again every year. In 2008 she's planning to do some more work with the residential colleges, in order to get more first-year students involved. She says studentsoul gathers

participated and this meant fewer leaders a couple of years down the track. Studentsoul had several student interns, but they also need guidance and support. In 2007, Helen had a woman from the UK in her 30s to working alongside her in a part-time position funded by the synod, and will again in 2008, which she says has made a crucial difference. The support of Leith Valley and Richard Dawson has been fundamental, she says, as well as the Synod of Otago and Southland which has provided key funding. Space is a huge issue for studentsoul, Helen says. "We could do so much more with a building." Space on or near the

campus is at a premium, and studentsoul was unsuccessful in its bid to secure a building next to campus late last year. At the moment, Helen has no space to run larger small groups or meetings, and studentsoul's current service venue has a lot of pressure on it, with continued use reliant on good will from the University. The down time between university terms is very important, and is spent recovering and planning. "The semesters are very intense; and then everyone leaves." Helen keeps in touch with Studentsoul attendees who have moved on, maintaining communication via email and social networking website

Facebook with several hundred people who are now spread around New Zealand and the world; "it's a huge community now and I can see how that can be sustained for a lifetime". Some studentsoul attendees have stayed on for postgraduate study or to live and work in Dunedin, got married and started families. The number of international students has been a surprise, she says. Another surprise has been the huge number of Presbyterian ministers' kids who have turned up at studentsoul. This is an age when people determine their identity and make fundamental decisions, she says. "All of these things need to be spoken into."



What is it?

Cafe-style interactive service on campus, Sunday evenings

Who comes?

Students

Where can I find out more?

www.studentsoul.church.net.nz

What's important for starting up?

- ➔ Funding is key; the congregation isn't self supporting
- ➔ Securing a venue in the university that's also a café
- ➔ Camps and personal development work are crucial for building leaders



Knox grows young leaders

A small town in Taranaki has developed a thriving children's ministry that harnesses young people's potential as leaders. Waitara's population is just over 6000 people and it faces an unemployment rate double the national average. According to Census data, 29 percent of families in Waitara have only one parent, compared to 19 percent across New Zealand as a whole.

Knox Waitara, a church with about 80 adults, is running children's programmes that draw in more than 180 children from 80 families, many of whom have no prior connection to the church.

Children, youth and families coordinator Jennie McCullough says part of the key to the ministry is that children are intentionally trained and mentored for leadership. At about the age of nine, children with potential are identified

and attend a camp, and later become part of a small group that helps develop this potential. Knox runs the Dynamite Bay programme, which is an interactive Christian learning programme aimed at 5-13 year olds developed by Stu Duval 15 years ago. Jennie started the first Dynamite Bay club at St Andrew's, New Plymouth in 1994, and five churches in Taranaki now use the Dynamite Bay philosophy in 12 different programmes.

At Knox, a Dynamite Bay programme is run on a Sunday morning with two additional programmes, one for boys and one for girls, running in the week and reaching out into the community. All of the children get to become part of a small group with their own leader and assistant. The leader becomes their mentor/coach and helps the children make friends and become part of the group. Jennie coordinates the

leadership of these programmes, and trains and resources the leaders; the teenage leaders take charge of their small groups of 8-10 children. The boy's groups differ in that they have men leading the small groups who also act as a mentor to a teenage leader in training. Soon after developing the boy's programme, it became evident that many of the boys did not have a father or even a male role model in their life, so the church rose to the challenge to provide solid male mentorship for these boys. Jennie says this is meeting a big need in the community and has become well known throughout the schools and social services. The boys group is capped at 26 and Knox runs a waiting list, because they have found it better to take a holistic approach and focus on the quality of care rather than numbers attending. In the long term this prevents overload on the leaders, because as they get close to the families, the need for extra advice and support often arises.

Jennie says the small groups are "like a family", with leaders keeping in touch with members during the week and acting as a coach. The realisation that they are a role model for their group has a significant effect on the young leaders, she says; they learn that their faith is lived out seven days a week, whether at home, in town or at school. As they get older, many of these young people become leaders in the youth group, in the regional kids camps, and the holiday clubs, and have the opportunity to attend leadership retreats and training run throughout Taranaki.

The Sunday morning Dynamite Bay is run by Jennie with a team of 12 teens. The teenagers commit to lead a small group for



a year but often stay for two or three years before they leave for university. They meet for "Impact", a leadership breakfast, before each service.

About 40 young people attend the mid-week youth group, which also has small groups run by older teenage leaders alongside four adult leaders. Giving teenagers opportunities to serve and lead is vitally important, Jennie says. "They need a place where they can put their knowledge and faith into practice and use their talents and gifts. If we can't find them a purpose in the church and train them to their potential, then they will go elsewhere. You've got to give them a little bit of grace in a supportive environment so that they can develop."

One of the challenges that comes with this relational style of ministry is that when leaders move away, or go through a difficult time, or leave the church, the flow-on effects need to be sensitively handled and with wisdom. Jennie says this can be difficult to manage but it's important to be honest with children and young people and to give them the freedom to own their choices.

Another challenge has been finding adults willing to commit time to the ministry, which can take up significantly more than just an hour on Sundays. Leaders become part of their group's extended families, and even if they're on holiday or

having time off they might be texted. Jennie says she tries to instil in her leaders the importance of boundaries and making sure they have their own time out with God.

Other family ministries at Knox include the Rainbow Play group, which caters for the under fives, with most people who bring their babies/toddlers from the Waitara community. Jennie sees this as an extension of church, where families can be ministered to in a familiar environment. A mums' group also runs once a term and has become another place of encouragement where women can connect, she says.

The seed for this focus at Knox was sown more than 20 years ago by a pioneering minister. His philosophy become part of the unique DNA of the church, Jennie says, and as a result the church "has a big heart for training up the new generation of God, is family-focused and missional minded".

"It is this sustained vision that is a key part of the ministry's success. Growing the next generation is a process that takes time, persistence, prayer and significant numbers of people - it's more than a fancy programme."

As a result the Sunday services are flexible and "perhaps a little

chaotic" at times, in order to help families and children feel at home throughout the service. The music team are predominantly young, with musically gifted teenagers identified, trained and encouraged to get involved.

Jennie says that churches embarking on this kind of ministry "need to realise that it's a long-term commitment and that there is a cost

to it in resources, finances, time, and preferences."

Over the last four years, significant inroads have been made into the community, communication with other agencies, such as school, CYFS and Maori organisations has been established, and trust has been built.

New referrals are increasing, for children who need a coach/mentor, socialisation, are at risk or need quality care in the holidays. "We never underestimate the power of a child to influence their family and others in their class at school," Jennie says.

The programmes are funded through grants, with local bank TSB being a generous provider, and donations. Camps have a fee, the holiday programme charges \$15 a day, and children pay \$2 for each of the mid-week Dynamite Bay sessions, with some of those unable to pay sponsored by congregation members.



What is it?

Family and children's community ministry

Who comes?

Children and their families, often unconnected with the church

Where can I find out more?

www.waitara.org.nz

What's important for starting up?

- ➔ A long-term vision
- ➔ Adults willing to commit time to mentoring young people
- ➔ Being a mission-focused church



EPIC effort targets youth

Building positive memories into the lives of young people is the main aim of St Andrew's Waipukurau's EPIC Ministries.

All of St Andrews' children and young person ministries fall under the EPIC (Equipping People in Christ) umbrella. EPIC's activities are overseen by a trust made up of members from St Andrew's.

The establishment of a trust was important to allow access to external funds and contracts that might not have been available to a church, explains St Andrew's minister the Rev Ian Pimm. Partnering with the community was also important, he says, and while being upfront about faith, it was easier to do away from the umbrella of the church.

The day after the congregation gave its approval to establish St Andrew's Youth Trust (operating as EPIC), St Andrew's received a \$20,000 cheque from the McNutt Trust to get things kick-started, which Ian and his team took as a good sign for their new ministry.

As well as a clear theology that recognises lost people matter to God, a strategic plan has underpinned EPIC Ministries since its inception three or four years ago, explains Ian. Having a vision and plan are key elements of the ministry's success, which sees large numbers of young people involved in a variety of programmes that meet them in places where they are – such as school.

Ministries under the EPIC umbrella include a revamped Bible in Schools-style programme called Impact; an ecumenical youth group – Youth To The Max – for intermediate aged children; Rock Solid for high-school students; and school



holiday and special interest programmes (like surfing and skateboarding).

The variety and depth of EPIC's programmes mean that the lives of both church and unchurched children and young people from Waipukurau and surrounding communities are touched.

"One programme is OK, but many points of entry are better," says Ian of the philosophy behind EPIC.

Ian cites the skills of both trustees and EPIC's leadership team as one of the key factors behind the success of St Andrew's young people's ministry.

"These entities are only as good as the people in them. The trust runs lean and mean, and we've got the right people with the right skills doing the right jobs." He also speaks highly of EPIC's leadership team, which is led by former teacher Tama Bucknell. Two of their programmes – Youth To The Max and the Rock

Solid programme for high school students – regularly attract 60 or more young people.

Creating future young leaders is a core goal of the ministry and leadership development is just as important as the programmes themselves, Ian says.

But they didn't always get things right with training and development. One thing identified early on was that youth interns were being given too much responsibility without the necessary support to make it work. This demoralised the interns and left EPIC's leadership wondering why results weren't being achieved.

This has since been addressed with a mentoring programme, where all interns work alongside a more experienced leader to help them build their skills and experience.

While this system is working much better, it has curtailed potential growth a little, says Ian, because there simply aren't enough experienced leaders

to pair up with the number of potential young leaders coming through. Retaining a good supply of experienced youth leaders is one of the challenges of sustaining this ministry, especially in a small community like Waipukurau where young people often move away for better employment or lifestyle opportunities.

A core part of EPIC's philosophy is meeting young people where they are, so interaction at local schools is important says Tama, EPIC's team leader and one of four youth workers employed by the trust.

One such programme, Rock, is run at the local college, and is lead by youth leaders, who are also students at the college, during lunchtime. Up to 100 students attend depending on weather and the activity, says Tama.

Getting students to see how far they can pull a fire engine (using the local brigade's fire truck), seeing how many students can fit into an old car, Fear Factor-style eating competitions and gumboot tossing are just some of the activities that have been part of Rock's programme. By being part of the team facilitating Rock, student youth leaders are identifying their faith to fellow students, and helping the young people who attend make connections between faith and other aspects of their lives. Tama says there are a few young people who come to Rock events who also come along to

other EPIC programmes. Taking a holistic approach to ministry and recognising the importance of sports coaches, families and all the others who influence the lives of young people is an important part of EPIC's philosophy. While upfront about their faith, that's only one part of the programmes on offer, not the entirety, say both Ian and Tama.

In association with local police,

about 100 clients per year. Partnerships with local agencies are also an important part of EPIC's success. There are plans in the pipeline to extend the MSD-funded youth worker's responsibilities into the youth justice area, once further discussions have taken place with relevant agencies like Child, Youth and Family. "We look at where the gaps are. We don't want to compete

"One programme is OK, but many points of entry are better"

EPIC also co-ordinates a programme called Leap, which involves working with a small group of intermediate-age children nominated by local schools for one year. LEAP's primary purpose is to provide role models and positively influence the lives of these young people to help them realise their potential. One of the other success stories at EPIC is a joint venture with the Ministry of Social Development. EPIC has a full-time youth worker (funded by a contract with the MSD) to assist young people into education or training opportunities. Trying to get people back to school is a priority, and where this isn't practical, assistance is given to help them into employment – everything from CV preparation to helping them get a drivers' licence. The youth worker has

for kids or resources," says Ian, whose vision for EPIC is to provide an environment that helps young people see that there is an alternative to the drugs and drinking culture that is common among today's young people.

Ian sees EPIC's future as working with families rather than just working with young people, which has been the main focus so far. This will be discussed at an upcoming strategic planning session where the plan for the next couple of years will be set. Ian, who is a big believer in "nothing ventured, nothing gained", encourages parishes around the country to take a few more risks when it comes to initiating ministry programmes. "What we're doing is easy," he says, "Congregations can be too safe. They're worried about things falling over."

What is it?

Multi-faceted ministry in a small Hawke's Bay community

Who's involved?

Young people, often from outside the church

Where can I find out more?

Talk to Tama Bucknell, EPIC Team leader, or Rev Ian Pimm from St Andrew's Waipukurau

What's important for starting up?

- ➔ Having committed, passionate and skilled leaders
- ➔ Having a clear vision for the future and a plan to get there
- ➔ Establishing the right operating structure (in this case a trust)



Elderly embrace adventure

To go on one of their adventures "you must be older than someone you know", says St David's Richmond's seniors ministry organiser Alex Johnston.

The programme started off as something for the church's own seniors, but now attracts a wider age group including people from mostly outside the church, he says.

The offer of a van to transport people was the catalyst for the adventures ministry. When it became available, Alex decided to take a group of the church's elderly people up to Rainbow Ski field near Nelson, and on the way home they stopped at Lake Rotoiti, where one of the participants, Martha, asked if Alex could organise a ride on the lake's water taxi. After that, Alex asked if she'd like a helicopter ride. And he says the ministry, which was initially known as the "Martha and Betty Adventure

group", after the two 75-year-old adventure-seeking women who inspired him to take the idea further, snowballed from there.

Initially the adventures utilised Alex's own experience working for the Department of Conservation with the likes of mountain walks, but trips soon got more adventurous as more volunteers and local organisations got on board. Recent trips have included hot air balloon rides, cruises on Nelson harbour, helicopter rides, and sailing around the Marlborough Sounds.

As well as the parish volunteers who're involved, good relationships with local organisations who offer their services at a discount have also been key to keeping the ministry going.

"You only get people to Christ by building a relationship with them," says Alex, who believes

contacting people via mailbox drops and the like aren't the best way to go. "It must be face-to-face, or you're wasting your time."

During the start-up phase, getting to know those in the neighbourhood around the parish on a personal level was critical, he says. Through earlier ministry initiatives like delivering flowers or distributing calendars to locals, he built up a good knowledge of where elderly people lived. So when it came to finding people who might be interested in the adventures, it was easy enough to call into the homes and invite them along. They also "market" the adventures to the people who attend a fortnightly showing of a contemporary movie at St David's.

A Nelson fair showcasing services for the elderly has also been an important means of getting people involved. At the fair, people were asked to write down the sort of adventures they would like to go on, and Alex now uses the information they provided to target the people who have expressed an interest in a particular type of adventure.

The ministry is self-funding, with people paying to go on the adventures, says Alex, who, along with a team of committed volunteers, organises all the outings, putting in about 30-40 hours a week (collectively) to make things happen. Giving time is critical, he says. They aim for nine trips per year, avoiding the summer holiday season when tourist operators are busy.

One of the unexpected challenges for Alex was a lack of commitment to ministry with the elderly from those within church leadership. Because of this, it was harder to build buy-



Photo courtesy of Waimea Weekly

in within the congregation for the ministry. But Alex and his volunteer team persevered with the ministry, which has now been going for eight years. Sharing the Good News is what it's all about for Alex, who says his vision for the ministry is to "see lost people come back to

Christ". Alex was surprised to find that many of the elderly people going on the adventures had been hurt by the church at some stage in their life, and his hope is that through love – which in this case involves providing fellowship, listening, and giving of time – that these people can find their way back

to a loving relationship with God. There are around 50 people who attend the movie screenings/ adventures and who receive a devotional booklet once every three months. Alex says it's all part of bringing God's word to those who might not otherwise hear it.

What is it?

Organised trips for seniors and other members of the community.

Who does it attract?

People from the parish neighbourhood – most of whom don't go to church

Where can I find out more?

Talk to Alex Johnston from St David's Richmond on (03) 544 6378 or alex.judy@ts.co.nz

What was important starting out?

- ➔ Getting to know people and building relationships with them
- ➔ Committing time (and lots of it) to make things happen



Recipe for lasting success

When a ministry has been going for 16 years, you know it's meeting a real community need. So what's the secret to longevity? Meeting Point, St David's Palmerston North's community-facing ministry, is made up of a series of cooking classes alternating with a crafts gathering where people chat, play cards, crochet, or mend and sew clothing for their families using donated sewing machines. Morning tea is also provided, says co-ordinator Sue Walker. Part of Meeting Point's success has been due to having clear responsibilities for the organising team, explains Sue. When its founder Betty Holmes died, it lost momentum for a while as the vitality of those remaining faded. However, with a new person, Marjory Edmonds, offering to share the



responsibility of leadership, the ministry has been reborn. Now, the preparation and clean-up is covered by a roster system while Sue looks after the administration and grant

applications. This has helped to spread the workload. Meeting Point runs between February and mid-November each year and during this time there are three courses of

budget cooking, each running for four sessions. These are funded by a grant from the Adult Community Education scheme. The classes, which attract between 30-40 people each time, demonstrate everyday cooking. Those on low incomes, the elderly and new immigrants are among the people who attend.

The focus is on nutritional food and working with basic ingredients, says Sue, who's been involved with the cooking classes since they started in 1991. Four or five recipes are demonstrated each time and include puddings, main and vegetarian dishes.

The participants are given recipe sheets and have a chance to taste the food at the end of the class.

The motivation to start the cooking classes came at a time when Government policy was putting the crunch on low-income families, many of whom weren't aware of how to prepare cheap, nutritional food.

"Not as many people these days know what to do with the basics and don't know how to cook a batch of scones, for instance," she says.

Sue describes seeing an elderly widower gaining confidence cooking for the first time and watching him and others bloom. This is what inspires her about the Meeting Point programme.



"I'm encouraged that we're empowering people. By breaking through the limitations that they impose on themselves, they are free to try new things. They might only come for six or 12 months, but you can really see a change in confidence," she says. Sue explains that regular meetings and planning for the future are an important part of Meeting Point's success, ensuring its continuity. It is also vitally important to take care of the volunteers, make sure they are valued and also encourage new people to share the workload.

She says support from the local community paper has also helped sustain Meeting Point. The publicity brings new people through the door and raises awareness about the classes.

"For years the paper has printed our budget recipes – Meals on a Shoestring – and every now and again they do an article about us," says Sue.

People can make a donation to attend the classes if they wish, but Sue explains that appreciation is often shown in other ways, like bringing morning tea or volunteering to assist with class preparation or demonstrating one of their own recipes.

She believes church isn't just about worship on Sunday, and says that Meeting Point provides another point of entry into church life, or an alternative in its own right.

Sue says all things have a lifetime, and believes Meeting Point has been blessed to have such a long run.

"It's important to enjoy it while it's happening. Situations and life changes, and we shouldn't have any regrets about that," Sue says.

What is it?

A community group offering cooking classes

Who does it attract?

New immigrants, recently widowed, those on a budget and everyone in between

Where can I find out more?

Meeting Point Co-ordinator Sue Walker c/- St David's Palmerston North

What was important starting out?

- ➔ Identifying and meeting a need in the community
- ➔ Having a committed team of volunteers
- ➔ Having a vision for the future