



global mission

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 Otara. "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 Otara, 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 treasury 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 