

Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

SUMMER 2017, ISSUE 71

Churches
illuminate
Christmas

www.presbyterian.org.nz

COMMENT: IONA ROBINSON

“BUILDING A JUST HOUSING FUTURE”

I have grown up in a family that believes you should leave the world in a better place than you found it. I, therefore, felt very privileged when I was given the opportunity to attend the Salvation Army's Just Action social justice conference, in September. Held across two days in Mount Wellington, Auckland, the conference featured five highly experienced speakers, all incredibly informed about particular issues relating to social justice in New Zealand.

The conference included various panel discussions, comprised of various thinkers and workers within New Zealand's social justice community, who reflected and debated the ideas brought forward by the keynote speakers. I might have been the youngest person at the conference and vastly under-informed about the majority of the issues, but I was determined to take something of value away. The two discussions which resonated the most with me were about housing and faith.

Shamubeel Eaquab, an independent economist, and commentator, was the first speaker of the conference, and discussed the need for a “just housing future”. It is common knowledge in New Zealand that we are in the midst of a housing crisis, and although popular opinion is that the crisis is slowly being fixed, Eaquab argued that the exact

opposite is in fact true. He believes that it is becoming more and more difficult for people to afford homes or even rentals.

The average price of a first home is rising faster than incomes, and home ownership is at the lowest it has been since the 1950s. The houses which are affordable are old, damp and often mouldy. The rate of homelessness is rapidly rising in our big cities. This is a crisis which is affecting all areas of New Zealand society. Young people, those from lower social-economic backgrounds and new families are all struggling to put a roof over their heads.

However, it often seems that the pleas for help are falling on deaf ears. I was personally appalled at the level of backlash against the Labour Party's proposed capital gains tax. Criticism came from people who felt that having to pay tax on a second or third home was a form of daylight robbery, even though there are families living in cars in South Auckland, unable to find even a room to rent.

However, Eaquab believes that all was not lost. At a housing panel crisis in Wellington on 7 September, he was delighted to hear that New Zealand's major political parties agreed that something needs to be done immediately about providing affordable housing, and that their proposed plans were strikingly similar.



Iona Robinson

Personally, this is an issue of immediate concern, as I'm part of the “flatter” generation, and in the following years we will start to search for homes of our own. I am currently looking for a flat, but given that I live in central Auckland, this is proving almost impossible. However, I am aware that I already have an advantage in life, that my parents own their own home. As Eaquab made clear, the path for the future is to ensure that everyone, regardless of income and background, has access to good quality, affordable homes.

On the second day of the conference, there was a panel discussion around creating a gospel-centred social justice future. The panel was chaired by Malcolm Irwin from the Salvation Army. I was raised to think of faith as a doing word, that at the heart of the gospel is grace. Jesus was a revolutionary, determined to rebuild the world from the ground up. The panel discussed how the Church should not always look inwards, but out, into the community, finding ways that we can “rebuild the world”.

– Iona Robinson represented the Presbyterian Church at the Just Action social justice conference organised by The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit and held 15 to 16 September 2017 in Auckland.

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Correction

Page 24 of the spring edition of *Spanz* featured an article about the rebuild of a church in Lamnatu on Tanna Island, Vanuatu. The photo accompanying the article was not of the church that was rebuilt, and was incorrectly supplied to *Spanz*. Our apologies to the build team.

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

The Right Rev Richard Dawson contributes a regular column to *Spanz*.

It's Life Jim...

Christmas is such an important time for this society of ours and we need to realise this as Christians. Christmas doesn't just whisper the Gospel, it breathes it into the heart of society like a lifeguard breathing life into a half-drowned swimmer. It is perhaps difficult for us to see after enduring a lifetime of cynicism and criticism of the holiday, but I think we need to take a second look.

Christmas breathes grace. Essentially grace is the free gift of God – there is nothing we can do or could do to earn it. It is God's gift of life to us and all we have to do is to receive it. The gift of grace is at the heart of the Gospel. Giving is perhaps the most concrete way of representing what God does for us and so giving at Christmas still elicits that grace in a powerful way.

Furthermore, despite the powerful tide of secularism in this country, Church still enjoys a fantastic cultural focus at Christmas time and churches who work with that continue to enjoy considerable community support and profile. My own parish has, for years, made a special effort to produce a Christmas Eve service for children. We've tried countless ways of making this time special for children and most have worked, including holding the service early in the evening so that children can get to bed at a reasonable time. There has hardly been a year when this hasn't drawn a significant crowd of community people and visitors who have nothing to do with our parish.

And the key component over these years has been the life we've been able to inject into those gatherings. Everything we do at this time of year has been designed to give life to those who come, and to celebrate the life we have because of Christ. And, as the saying goes, where there is life there is hope!



It is precisely this which makes the Christmas story so powerful. Everyone craves life – we are made to live – it is our birthright, as it were, in God and so when we taste that life, it cannot help but be attractive. In the old and original *Star Trek* TV series Spock was fond of saying “It's life Jim, but not as we know it!” When the phrase arose in the show one always knew that an exciting adventure was in store. The same goes for those who are touched by the life of Jesus at Christmas. That life speaks to both who they were meant to be and who God is.

Christmas time is, almost by default, a time of hope and a time when the message of hope has some real purchase in our whole society, so why wouldn't we take advantage of that? We have the cultural tide with us at this time of year, so let's take advantage of it to present the true story of Jesus and to remind as many people as possible of God's love for the world. Let's be as creative as possible with our services and with other ideas to present the Christmas story and to serve the community in ways that evoke all the graciousness of God.

Make Christmas count!

Glow in the Park

ignites Christmas spirit



At Glow in the Park, the handing out of glow sticks and carol singing from dusk are an established highlight of the event.

Five years after it started, Glow in the Park remains a Christmas celebration that reflects the diverse character of the Mt Wellington community it serves.

It's a colourful energy-filled amalgam that each year offers local families an evening of fun, carol-singing, Christmas readings, food-stalls and music – with many of the artists sharing cultural links to the ethnically-diverse people of Maungarei/Mt Wellington.

At the December 2013 inaugural Glow in the Park event, international soul singer Sista Jacqui Brown led the choir through carols and then segued into a selection of gospel songs. The music went down a treat, and she has since been back to perform at several more Glow in the Park events. Last year, the bands included Matt Nanai, The Kingsmen, Otaru's The Church Boiz, Pacifika musos Revere, Niuean/Kiwi musician Tommy Nee, and more – all of whom have more than made their mark on the local music scene.

The handing out of glow sticks and carol singing from dusk has become an established highlight of the event, knitting everyone together in a communal celebration of Christmas.

Right from the start, Glow in the Park was intended to be different – and it is.

"This is about so much more than singing Christmas carols. It's more about acknowledging our community and building on those connections," says Rev Howard Carter, Minister of St Peter's Presbyterian Church Ellerslie/Mt Wellington. "It doesn't slot into the traditional carol service because we have a range of musicians playing. This event is more about strengthening community ties and running a family event that appeals to everyone, whether or not they are regular church-goers."

Howard's is one of several local churches involved in running Glow in the Park, and right now he is deeply involved in organising the 2017 event. It promises to be another triumph for those putting it together, fulfilling its aim of providing something for people of all ages, cultures and persuasions.

Glow in the Park started when Auckland Council's Maungakiekie-Tamaki Local Board approached Mt Wellington Community

Church with the suggestion that they join forces to host a new community Christmas event. The Board knew of the church's sound record of laying on community events and was willing to put some money into the kitty for an entirely new one.

Russell Grainger, Maungarei Community Christian Trust (MCCT) Chief Executive and Senior Pastor of the Mt Wellington Community Church explains that while the event was the initiative of the Maungakiekie-Tamaki Local Board, its overall responsibility remains with MCCT. In addition, the Trust oversees organisational elements linked to the event, such as health and safety.

The MCCT is also part of the Maungarei Ministers Association (MMA). Five churches in the area help organise and run Glow in the Park, and while most of the funding comes from the Maungakiekie-Tamaki Local Board, the churches and local businesses have also stepped up to provide support. Volunteers from most of those churches usually run food and drink stalls as fundraisers and provide additional assistance in running the event, and the Maori wardens have become regulars in helping with security.

The popularity of Glow in the Park has helped cement its place in the community.

"We get a lot of feedback, especially on the night itself," says Russell. "As we walk around, people make the effort to tell us how great it is and how much they appreciate it. We also get good feedback on the event's Facebook page, and a professional survey company commissioned by the Local Board has provided positive feedback."

Howard says Glow in the Park has attracted local sponsorship and moves are currently underway to grow that base for future events. He also says the event is becoming increasingly popular with locals.

"In the four years we have been involved it has grown. In 2015, around 3,000 people attended. It dropped a bit last year, mainly due to our advertising strategy not being as good as the year before, but we hope to bring those numbers up again this year."

The 2017 Glow in the Park event will be at Hamlin Park from 5.30pm to 9.30pm on Sunday, December 17.

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)

Christmas story comes alive at drive-thru



The Christmas drive-thru is a three-day event that takes place rain or shine and involves 100 volunteers, actors and live animals including donkeys, calves, and llamas posing as camels.

A chance remark overheard in a shopping centre sparked a novel and popular Christmas event in West Auckland.

For three evenings in mid-December, Massey Presbyterian Church's driveway turns into a nativity drive-thru that attracts 2,000 visitors annually.

Now in its 14th year, the idea was the brainchild of church elder Dan Mills.

"I was out shopping one day leading up to Christmas," Dan explains, "and passed by a man with his son and a trolley full of presents. He said, 'I hate Christmas'. I thought, how sad the true meaning of Christ's presence here on Earth has been lost."

Dan approached Rev Dr Stuart Lange with the community outreach idea, and both agreed it would be a non-threatening way to bring deeper meaning to this time of year.

"People get reluctantly caught up in the frenzied retail expectations and many have no idea anymore what the real message of Christ is," says Stuart. "Many in society have become a bit suspicious of the Church, that any church event could be boring, in-your-face, and will cost money. By giving them something free and fun, we undercut those assumptions."

"We don't ask for anything from visitors," Dan adds. "It's our Christmas gift to the community, in the spirit of generosity."

The first year of the drive-thru was "a bit nerve-wracking" says Stuart, but they have learnt a lot about staging since then.

Like the Gospel, the word has spread and people come from all over Auckland and from all religions (and none) to experience the five-minute event.

Aside from the classic manger scene, they are treated to various stations where choirs of little angels sing, youthful Roman Centurions guard the way, shepherds mind their sheep at Bethlehem, a Census booth records data, an inn and innkeeper offer lodgings, and the Three Wise Men point to a star.

All the animals in the Christmas production are real. Besides sheep, there are donkeys, calves, and llamas posing as camels courtesy of well-stuffed pillows on their backs.

Families can stay in their cars, with the windows rolled up if they prefer, while making their way through the five-minute event as it unfolds. Many drive through, park their cars and then walk through again. By the time it gets dark, the lighting takes full effect and creates magic.

Church members get behind the drive-thru in a big way, with over 100 volunteers of all ethnicities and ages lining up to play their part. All the actors in the different stations along the way are live. "Except for Jesus," says Dan. "We did try real babies but they tended to cry too much."

Don Buck Road in Massey is an ideal location, says Stuart, because it draws on a large suburban population but also has rural resources at its back step. Stuart's own role is to manage all the

animals on site and to chat with people walking through.

Volunteers welcome visitors, and give out a guide to what people will see. As cars and walkers leave, they take home small gifts such as a kid's activity book and candy cane as an invitation to explore the faith more.

"People are sometimes knocked out by it," says Dan. "They're amazed we do it in all weathers and we've even had people say, 'It's the happiest day of my life'. The kids love it of course. And we have a Sikh guy who brings his family each year."

All the stations have been built for weather protection, as the three-day event takes place rain or shine. Like any live theatrical performance, it requires a big investment of time to prepare, and becomes Dan's central task from mid-November onwards when his work among university students ends. Each year, they make small incremental refinements, but the message stays the same: Let's celebrate an incredible act of love that lives on 2,000 years later.

The 2017 drive thru dates are Thursday 14, Friday 15 and Saturday 16 December evenings from 7.30pm to 9.30pm at Massey Presbyterian Church, 510 Don Buck Road, Westgate. To see photos and videos of past drive-thrus go to christmasdrivethru.org.nz

Jade Reidy [Spanz](#)

AWARD WINNING PROGRAMME HELPS CHILDREN



Social Socks uses puppets, songs and picture bubbles to help children understand their feelings and how to express them in healthy ways.

Manawatu primary children are learning to be more caring, resilient and connected through a programme called Social Socks.

When Letitia* lost her mother at age five, silent grief wrapped itself around the inner pain and she closed down. Into her class came three big, loveable hand puppets, along with a team of trained counsellors, teachers and social workers. Having watched Jo, Lucy and Zak in action, Letitia made her own sock puppet and began to talk about her feelings with her classmates. Through this experience she connected with her dad again by using sock puppets.

That's the power of Social Socks, a programme set up in 2012 by Lesley Bates and Shirley Jourdain, both trained counsellors and members of St Alban's Presbyterian Church in Palmerston North.

"The vision arrived one day when I was looking out the window of a Fielding school during a counselling session with a student and thinking, there must be a way to reach more children," says Lesley.

Five years after its inception, Social Socks is flourishing. Last year alone it was delivered to over 250 children in eleven Year 1-4 classes throughout the Manawatu region, totalling over 3,000 voluntary hours, and won a Trustpower Education Sector Community Service Award.

Hand puppets have long captivated young children. Children with autism have emerged from their shells and started talking through their sock puppets, says Shirley, but it's not just those labelled "special needs" who learn to change how they interact in the classroom and the playground. Teachers and other professionals are reporting a substantial increase in the numbers of children with emotional and behavioural problems, who need extra input.

"Families have enormous financial stresses and are time poor as well. Parents often think children don't pick up on stress but they know exactly what's going on. I see it acted out in play therapy." Similar pressures exist in the classroom. "Teachers are exhausted and don't have the time or training to fully understand children's needs."

Social Socks offers schools seven free, one-hour-a-week sessions. The team help the children realise that they are unique,

to understand their feelings and how to express them in healthy ways, develop social skills, negotiate, and deal with disappointment. Songs and picture bubbles nurture resilience.

"If someone says you're silly, dust it off," is one of the lines we use," says Lesley. "We also get the kids to picture themselves in a bubble so the words bounce off. They get it, and often they go home and pass their new skills on to their parents. The parents say to us, 'I wish I'd known that when I was young'."

"And they treasure their Social Socks workbooks, which reinforce the learning," adds Shirley.

Social Socks is Lesley's passion. She lives and breathes it, with her husband Giles who, she says, "puts in his fair share". The programme is overseen by a Board of Trustees. A range of donations and grants enables it to be offered free to schools. Thirty-five volunteers, mostly recruited through St Alban's and word of mouth, pitch in with artistic, musical and culinary skills, with project management and prayer.

"The people who come to us feel hand-picked by God for their gifts," says Shirley, "For example, a retired man with instructional skills is making a wonderful job of writing our Programme Manual. The timing of who comes along continues to validate Lesley's vision. Many of them also grow personally."

The programme links to both the NZ School Curriculum and its School Values, which lays the groundwork for it to go national. Social Socks is delivered mostly to non-Christian schools, and although it promotes Christian values the team is careful to avoid promoting Christianity. "The programme is covered in prayer," says Lesley, "but we don't make that overt."

Lesley has been the focus of prayers this year, after being diagnosed with breast cancer in May. Determined for Social Socks to thrive with or without her, she has thrown herself into training a new group of helpers and facilitators, and connecting with groups in other regions about taking up the vision.

To find out more or donate to Social Socks, go to www.socialsocks.co.nz

Jade Reidy Spanz

*not her real name

Rev Fakaofu Kaio

~ FOR MODERATOR ~

2018-2020



The Rev Taimoanaifakaofu (Fakaofu) Kaio is not so much a reluctant Moderator as a hesitant one.

Whilst talking on the phone, explaining that he was unsure if he would allow himself to be nominated for Moderator, his wife Ruth overheard him and said, “When have you ever told God what to do?” Ruth reminded him that while he had found the two previous occasions of being nominated for Moderator-Designate draining, he is here to serve the Lord when called on. “I am honoured to have been chosen by the Church.”

The process of bringing a nomination to the Assembly for Moderator was different this year. A Commission, co-convened by the Very Rev Ray Coster and Very Rev Bruce Hanson, was appointed to oversee the process following the resignation of previous Moderator Designate Very Rev Andrew Norton.

In October the Commission informed the Church that it will be bringing Fakaofu's name to the General Assembly in October 2018 for election as Moderator of the Assembly.

Parish ministry is Fakaofu's true vocation. “Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking about a problem that a parishioner has. My parish has always had first call on me and now the national Church will be my parish too.”

He emphasises that he is not the minister with the answers for the Church. “I will be a bit different than previous Moderators. They have all done wonderful work and I have much respect for them. I do not plan to have a theme. I will ask the Church to tell me how best I can serve it. You will not hear my voice, but the voice of the Church.”

Although he knows he cannot attend every event, Fakaofu plans to try to be at all significant Church events. “I will prioritise being at the places where there are hard times over celebrations. Perhaps this is a return to a past way of moderating, waiting to be called on.”

Six years ago Fakaofu had a dream of great significance. “It's what we at home in the islands call a ‘mountain top experience’. I dreamed the words, ‘Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me’ [Matthew 16:24-26]. The meaning was clear; I have to put others before myself. I cannot wait for the time to be right. This is Jesus' call on our lives, to follow the leadership

model as in Christ – the suffering servant model, sacrificial and unconditional.”

Fakaofu's Samoan parents were missionaries with the London Missionary Society in Tokelau. He is named after the Tokelau island of Fakaofu where he was born. Tokelauan is the first of his five languages. He attended High School in Auckland then moved to Wellington where he met wife Ruth. They married young and started a family. They have four adult children, “Sei, Risati married to Nadia, Liana married to Manase, Tiale, plus our beautiful grandson Kalos”. Fakaofu and Ruth are both from the same island. “She is my rock and will support me.”

Fakaofu became an elder and lay preacher at Porirua Pacific Islanders Church of Christ The King. In 1992 his faith and life experience gained him entry to Knox Theological College. Since graduating he has ministered in both small and larger parishes and says both have their challenges and joys. “My first congregation, St Margaret's Belmont North Shore, had an average age of 70 and I was a young minister. They were young at heart though and I learnt a lot from them.”

Since 2005 Fakaofu has been minister at Onehunga Cooperating Parish. He says the congregation feel privileged and honoured at the prospect of sharing him with the national Church. “My priority will be my home parish. They know that when they need me I will be there for them.”

Prior to ministry Fakaofu worked in the Arohata Women's Prison, and before this as a foreman at the Ford factory. Both jobs prepared him to help parishioners. “At the prison I was helping women who have made a mistake. At the factory I rose up the ranks to middle-management and then had to tell the people I learned from what to do. I learnt a lot about working with many different people. It was multicultural and cross-cultural.”

Fakaofu has previously served the wider Church; as the moderator of the North Shore Presbytery in 2001, as the first moderator of the Northern Presbytery from 2011 to 2012, and as a representative at many ecumenical assemblies and consultations held in the Pacific, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean.

Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

YOUTH AWARDED FOR VISION

The consistently impressive fundraising efforts of Gisborne's Mangapapa Union Church youth group has attracted high praise from World Vision.

Fifteen members of the youth group took part in this year's World Vision 40 Hour Famine, raising just under \$9,000 for the humanitarian aid agency.

On its own, that's no mean feat for a group of 15 normally-ravenous teens. But it's the figure of \$33,500 that the youth group has raised as a collective since 2013 that inspired World Vision to recognise their fundraising efforts of the past few years with a special award.

As a result, three representatives of the 25-strong youth group were flown to Wellington to receive an award for raising the most money for World Vision's 40 Hour Famine out of similar groups in the lower North Island.

The trio – teens Sonja Van Wijk, Tabea Walker and Caleb Ney – brought back a framed certificate for their youth group, acknowledging Mangapapa Church as the top fundraising church in its region for the 2017 40 Hour Famine.

Church leaders at Mangapapa were delighted. Not only had the 2017 participants put themselves through the stomach-rumbling 40 Hour Famine and pulled in sponsors to support that, but they further swelled the coffers by organising a car wash, doing odd jobs in the community that included cleaning up backyards and doing a spot



Pictured working during Mangapapa's award-winning World Vision fundraiser are, from left: Mark Van Wijk, Matthew Ney, Caleb Ney, Patrick Ney, Sonja Van Wijk, Sabine Lapointe, and youth leader Kate Ney.

of gardening, and painting a coastal bach.

At the time of the award presentation, Mangapapa Union Church leader Stewart Patrick told a local newspaper that Mangapapa's youth group had been raising funds for World Vision for about 30 years, although it had not participated every year over those three decades.

He describes his parish as being "greatly blessed", and says: "We export gold nuggets to the big cities in terms of our youth who leave this district. I often think the country's university centres don't fully realise what they are getting from the provincial areas. I am consistently amazed at what they achieve here."

Equally as proud is Mangapapa's youth group co-ordinator Kate Ney. She says this year's group kick-started the famine stretch of the 2017 fundraiser at their regular Friday night youth group session.

"We did a 'donate your dinner' event this year, where people from the community were invited to come along to the church and donate the price of a typical dinner. In exchange, they were given a bowl of rice and we screened 'Salaam Neighbour', a documentary filmed in Jordan about the plight of Syrian refugees.

"On the Saturday, we did a car wash to raise money, and then the youth spent the night at two of the leaders' neighbouring houses. This year, we watched the movie 'The White Helmets'. We also embraced a 'sweat for Syria' idea and hired ourselves out for garden jobs that were paid for by donations to the 40 Hour Famine."

She says the group then headed to church on the Sunday morning to break their fast after the regular service.

The teens had been happy to engage in the fundraising initiative, demonstrating they care for those less fortunate and embracing the opportunity to work as a group to do something to help. Youth group members are currently working towards doing a short-term mission to Uganda in 2018.

Mangapapa Union Church has a congregation of around 180 and its youth group is no stranger to winning awards. In both 2014 and 2015, it was named the top 40 Hour Famine youth group fundraiser in New Zealand, and in 2016 it took the runner-up title, says Stewart.

"The church provided a significant donation to their total, after all their hard work. We provided a Subway lunch for them to break their famine, and they have been acknowledged in our church services, in newsletters and in our local newspaper, the Gisborne Herald."

Mark Van Wijk, a church parent/helper and father to one of the trio who went to Wellington, said there has long been a mission focus at Mangapapa.

"Mission and mission fundraising could be described as being part of Mangapapa youth group's DNA. Without doubt, it has become inter-generational, with each crop of youth building on the legacy that has gone before.

"That's something to celebrate."

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



Ashleigh received her Queen's Young Leaders Award from Queen Elizabeth II in a special ceremony at Buckingham Palace in June.

Young leader receives Queen's award for anti-bullying

Dunedin nursing student Ashleigh Smith received a Queen's Young Leaders Award for her work with bullying prevention group Sticks 'n' Stones

Twenty-year-old Ashleigh Smith credits her Presbyterian upbringing and Catholic primary schooling for her values – and her willingness to take action on them.

“My parents always taught me that if you felt unhappy about something and wanted to complain about it, you had to be willing to be the person who would make the change. That's the biggest thing they taught me: go and do something about it or be quiet,” she says.

Ashleigh grew up in Naseby, Central Otago and until the end of year 8 attended St John's Catholic School in Ranfurly. “We were always taught respect. That was hammered into us every day.”

She went to Maniototo Area School in year 9, and found herself confronted by a crisis in her first year when three young people took their own lives in just eight months. “That was a horrific period for me and every young person in our community,” she says.

“Bullying was something that had impacted me in my early years of high school, and after feeling and seeing the impact of suicide, I spent a couple of years with a lot of passion, anger and confusion.”

However, the combination of the teaching on respect and her parents' insistence on

walking the talk meant that when she had the opportunity to take action, she did.

When local woman Karla Sanders, who received funding from the Ministry for Social Development's Te Punanga Hamaru for a bullying prevention programme, visited the school, 30 young people from across Central Otago formed the group that founded Sticks 'n' Stones.

They created a new approach that meant students had to become experts rather than listen to experts. “We realised that there was a gap in the way bullying information was put across. Young people would think, ‘It just doesn't work like that for us, in reality’ and switch off. Young people had to not only have input, but be part of the process, organising the programmes and resources. They had to become the experts rather than listen to the experts,” says Ashleigh.

“Currently we are in the development of an app that Keryn Tubbs came up with. She found that young people experiencing bullying do not know where to go. We did research in Central Otago and found that almost 50 percent of those who said they were being bullied did not tell anyone or ask for help. Most were scared to tell their parents, worried that they would freak out.

“Keryn came up with the idea of an app with a few questions young people could answer and be told what services were available and what they could do. She is

leading that, and we are having a launch on Safer Internet Day next year.”

Ashleigh applied for a Queen's Young Leaders Award, given to young people in Commonwealth countries as part of the commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

“In June I went to London and met some of the most incredible people the Commonwealth has to offer. I really made a new family,” says Ashleigh. She received her award from the queen at Buckingham Palace, with Prince Harry and One Direction's Liam Paine in attendance.

Ashleigh is at Otago Polytechnic and one year off graduating in nursing. Fitting in her Sticks 'n' Stones work has been difficult “but I have got better at managing stress and making sure I do not get overwhelmed,” she says. “I am having doors open that I never would have dreamed of.”

“For me, being a Christian is about having been given this opportunity at life and having the opportunity to do everything I can to leave this place better than I found it. If I can help in the lives of others, that is a huge step towards doing that.

“I get nervous about my future, but I say to myself that I am going to stay committed and trust in what is ahead. I trust that God is there and I trust the path. My grandmother, Valerie Smith, who used to take me to Sunday school in Naseby taught me that.”

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

NEW VILLAGE CHURCH FOR CHRISTCHURCH

After six years of “treading water” the wait is finally over, says Rev Martin Stewart.

In early August, The Village Presbyterian Church at Bryndwr, Christchurch opened with a special service led by the Very Rev Ray Coster who, when he was the Church's Moderator, decommissioned the old St Stephen's building which was badly damaged in the February 2011 earthquake.

“It was a nice bookend for Ray and marks a whole new chapter for us,” says Martin, one of three Ministers at The Village, a collaboration between the Bryndwr and Papanui congregations which occurred after both church buildings were rendered unusable in the Canterbury quakes.

Since then, both churches have used their respective halls for worship, as well as having a combined service in a local funeral home initially twice a month, but later weekly.

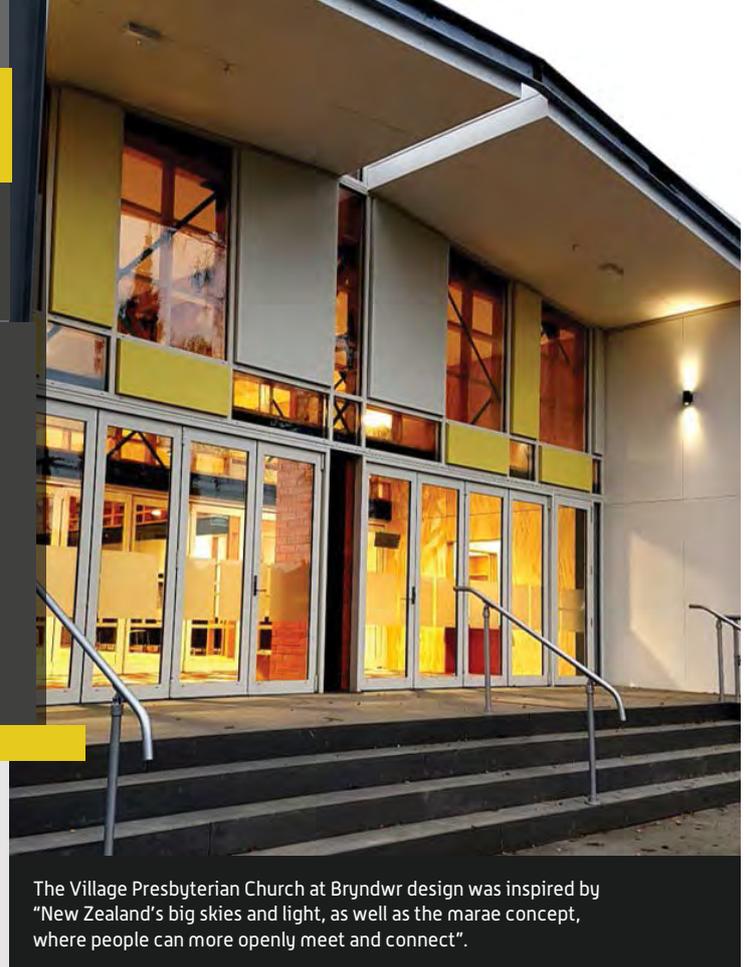
“It's nice to finally be in our dedicated space for that community-facing activity while also centering the 10am Sunday expression in the new St Andrew's College Chapel,” says Martin.

Work on The Village Church started two years ago, with planning commencing a few years prior to that, he adds. A great deal of work went into the design of the 809m² building to ensure that it would be a part of, and actively engage with, the community, as well as to future-proof it for a changing worship landscape. The building also needed to align with its New Zealand context.

“We talked a lot with our architect Gordon Dalkie, who is a part of our church, about how churches in Aotearoa tend to shut out the light and are hard to see in, making it seem as though they've got something to hide. These churches are also not especially adaptable to different uses. Instead, Gordon was inspired by New Zealand's big skies and light, as well as the marae concept, where people can more openly meet and connect.”

It's why the building is able to be completely opened up, from the concertina doors at both ends of the building, and lots of breakout spaces and tables.

“The idea is that the whole building can be adapted for various uses. So many churches are based on medieval designs and concepts, with an altar at the front and the congregation as the audience. But the old model of worship is changing, as people vote with their feet, so why would we put up an old building that doesn't serve them?” says Martin.



The Village Presbyterian Church at Bryndwr design was inspired by “New Zealand's big skies and light, as well as the marae concept, where people can more openly meet and connect”.

“Instead, this structure is forward looking – where are we going next as a congregation? The idea is very much about community and creating a space where people can connect not via the old frameworks but in a building that is flexible enough to still be viable in 50 years time.”

Martin is excited about some of the initiatives that the new church will support, including The Village Well, a proposed urban retreat space which will allow city-dwellers a place of quiet reflection and creativity, with a health and wellness component. It is proposed The Village Well will be headquartered at the Papanui site, where another new church building is due to be completed later this year.

Another initiative in the planning is a Saturday morning market selling second hand goods which Martin hopes will engage the whole community.

“I'm hoping the community will bring items to it and help to run it. And through this we would look to form new relationships and hopefully make grants for community projects from the profits. It is part of our push to innovate as we negotiate how to do church in our part of the city. Forging new ways of connecting with people has to be foundational and hospitality and generosity seem to be the best platforms for us in this challenging time.”

Interestingly, the opening of The Village Church at Bryndwr marks 20 years since the church's Community Centre was started by previous St Stephen's ministers, Brian and Sylvia Hardie.

“The new building gives us the opportunity to build on their legacy and to create an active, engaged community centre for the future.”

Martin says the insurance payout for the damaged St Stephen's Church covered the cost of the new build, which was built onto the side of the old church hall.

Sharon Stephenson | [Spanz](#)

NEW YOUTH WORKER

- FOR MARTON -



Jasmin Vanderwerff is a full-time youth worker at St Andrew's, Marton. She is the only youth worker in any Christian organisation in the town.

Jasmin Vanderwerff is the full-time youth worker for Marton's St Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Jasmin was doing mission work in Brazil when she was interviewed via Skype for her new role as youth worker at St Andrew's, Marton. "They hired me before they met me," she says, marvelling at this leap of faith.

About to sign on with Youth with a Mission for two years, the 23-year-old headed for home instead, deciding that work in the Marton community would be "a perfect fit" – and so it has turned out.

Jasmin grew up in Palmerston North, went to boarding school in Feilding and completed her Bachelor of Ministry at Laidlaw College in 2016. While studying, she had an internship placement at St Alban's in Palmerston North, working for ten hours a week with Youth Pastor Murray Brown, who helped set up her interview for the Marton role.

Rev Phil Warner was determined to have a full-time youth worker at St Andrews, having employed Kyle Hastelow for five hours per week for the past four years. PressGo came to the party with about half of the money required and other funding and donations have been added. Says PressGo Catalyst Lisa Wells, "The parish was listening to the community, thinking in terms of doing something with, rather than for, the community."

Jasmin started work in July and her instructions were to do whatever she thought she should. "There's definitely a need for a youth worker here," she says. "There are lots of children in the area, with five primaries and two high schools, but there's not a lot happening. The only 'cool' thing to do seems to be to going to the skate park and sitting around."

She works in with the local district council youth worker, but is the only youth worker in any Christian organisation in the town. "So many people have come up to me and said, 'I can't believe you are here.'"

Jasmin runs the Sunday School and the Friday night Youth on Broadway group, which was developed by Kyle with Sue Warner, and goes to schools at lunch time as well as helping with Bible in Schools. She is finding that secondary students are beginning to drop into her office at the church in the after-school hours.

Jasmin was taken to Sunday School by her mother. While at boarding school she spent the weekends with her brother as her parents were consultants in the dairy industry and were often on the road.

"I found my faith while I was at high school," she says. "There were no sense of crisis in that. It was always there with me. I looked at other churches after I left school, but I realised the Presbyterian Church was the one where I wanted to be.

"One of the big things is that we have a lot of heart for young people. We care about them and where they are going and what they are doing. That atmosphere gives a place for them to belong. There's a lot of love in that atmosphere."

Jasmin has often found herself the youngest person in the various Presbyterian Church circles she has been involved with, and in turn she sees her mentoring of those younger than herself as vital to her success in Marton.

"Mentoring is key to sustainable long-term youth work. It's about leaders who can lead others. The most effective youth ministries I have seen are those based on small groups and mentoring. There's only so much I can do. I have to empower the children to take leadership themselves if it is going to be long lasting."

Her recent three months in Mexico and two months in Brazil taught her about team work, she says. "It showed me how important it was to rely on other people. Having other people involved, you get a whole lot more out of everything because everyone can provide something to the group.

She believes youth work has to be "a whole church effort. God doesn't call us individually, he calls us in community," she says.

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

Training everyday people to be the Church



A 3DM Kiwi Church outdoor gathering.

Living like Jesus is the mission of a global movement called 3DM, that has spread to Christchurch.

After the earthquakes in Christchurch, the Church was a solid backbone in people's recovery. Buildings may have collapsed, but congregations found a new relational life independent of going to church on Sunday, says Kiwi Church's Rev Darryl Tempero.

But old habits die hard. As time has moved on, many churches have reverted back to life as usual, leading many to ask, "Where to next?" says Darryl.

A more sustained approach to change is being led by a large group of ministers from upwards of 30 churches in the city, who wanted to see a local 3DM movement happening. 3DM works to put discipleship and mission back into the hands of everyday people, training its Jesus disciples to be the Church instead of just going to church.

Darryl and fellow minister Rev Dan Spragg of Christchurch North Parish have been part-funded by PressGo to participate in the two-year journey with a \$4,000 grant from the Presbyterian Foundation. PressGo had already funded a successful 3DM pilot throughout New Zealand.

"We've seen merit in the previous programmes. It's a helpful tool," says Lisa Wells, PressGo Catalyst. "People had good experiences of putting the model into action."

Lisa says both Christchurch ministers who applied for funding to take part in the Christchurch movement already have discipleship as a priority.

One of the key 3DM tools is a "huddle" – a place where up to eight invited leaders gather together so that they can grow and learn from one another. The huddle requires a high level of commitment from leaders, and the main difference between a huddle and a traditional small group is accountability, explains Darryl.

"Each time they meet there is a high invitation to relationship, plus a high challenge to do what members sense God is inviting them to do. Each week members are intentionally held accountable for their growth."

Leaders from the group then go on to start their own huddles, and this group discipleship process puts people, rather than a programme, at the centre.

"That's what attracted me," Darryl explains. "I'm a bit allergic to imported programmes. We sometimes have the attitude in New Zealand of 'she'll be right' but often these imports haven't delivered what was hoped for. In this movement relationships are at the centre."

Dan agrees. "Even the word 'discipleship' for me tends to carry some baggage. But there seems to be a different feel about the 3DM project, it's structured but not restricting, and already showing signs of fruit."

The old church model has tended to be minister-centric, says Darryl. "We've cultivated that through training and sometimes I think our egos prefer it that way. 3DM inverts that thinking and one of their key sayings is, 'If you grow the church you don't necessarily get disciples. But, if you grow disciples, you will always get a church.'"

Darryl prefers to see himself as a player coach rather than a minister. "It's more

playful," he says. "I believe language creates culture and we need new words, new concepts that create new rhythms of life. For example, if we use the word 'freedom' instead of gospel then a line of enquiry opens up as to what Kiwis could be free from. Maybe that's freedom from consumerism or a whole raft of 'shoulds'."

The old model of church "shoulds" made no space for the wholeness and uniqueness of who people are, says Darryl. "People haven't been free to bring their whole selves to church, to be who God made them. You either had to fake it or leave."

Kiwi Church attracts people who are de-churched. "Most of those who are part of our faith community have left the Church but still retain a commitment to God in their lives."

Rather than Sunday service, they hold a flagship gathering of beer and a BBQ on the first Sunday of every month. The focus is on doing life together.

At Christchurch North, the parish is in the middle of a courageous project on re-imagining how it is as the "neighbourhood church" in the post-quake city.

"We've always had a strong sense of community and an authentic mission," says Dan, "but one aspect identified as needing a bit more work is discipleship. Many of us grew up in the age of the two things never spoken of: politics and religion. Having open conversations about and paying attention to the growth of our Christian faith alongside and with others isn't something that we're very good at."

Jade Reidy [Spanz](#)



Former Kids Friendly coach to light up Auckland City



New Auckland City chaplain at large Jill Kayser is looking forward to meeting a mix of people on Auckland City's inner city streets during her walks. She will be joined by husband Paul, and their boxer Dusty who looks like he would prefer to be at home by the heater.

With a leap of faith national Kids Friendly Coach Jill Kayser has decided to move on from leading the Church's children's ministry to become Auckland City's 'chaplain at large'.

In late November Jill concluded 14 years of creating, nurturing and guiding Kids Friendly into a vibrant children's ministry. "I'm pleased to say that I leave Kids Friendly thriving with Robin and Cheryl," Jill says, "because I have a real sense of excitement about moving forward with my new role. It feels like a God thing."

The chaplaincy role that Jill will take up in January 2018 was created in 2013 by St James Presbyterian and Methodist Aotea Chapel in Auckland. They appointed John MacDonald as a chaplain at large to help connect people living in their local area, the inner city. Under John's care the ministry evolved to become Splice. As chaplain Jill will work alongside John, who is also superintendent of Methodist Mission Northern. Twenty percent of her time will go to parish commitments and 80 percent to city chaplaincy.

In her chaplaincy role Jill is aiming to connect with inner city communities, develop relationships, and find new creative and innovative ways for city residents to be together. She also plans to work collaboratively with groups to foster social change. "The emphasis will be on practicing and encouraging radical, inclusive hospitality from the heart."

Jill is making a full commitment to the role and to the city. "My husband Paul,

our dog Dusty and I are looking for an inner city property to rent so that we can be part of the community."

Jill says she is both excited and a little nervous about the role. "My role will include getting to know the people who work, play and live in Auckland city including the homeless, prostitutes and immigrants. Paul and Dusty will help with my ministry by attending evening events and walking the city streets with me. I think lovable Dusty might prove to be an ice breaker! It will be great to have Paul involved as the Kids Friendly role often took me away from him."

John is encouraging Jill to bring her authentic self to her ministry, which is something she is looking forward too. "I'll be witnessing, listening, talking to those who want to talk, sharing openly and honestly. I'll be living my faith, not forcing it on anyone who isn't interested."

As she looks forward to the opportunities her new role will provide, she says she is also looking back and appreciating the many opportunities she was given during her 14 years working for the Presbyterian Church.

"I had the chance with Kids Friendly to dream, create and innovate."

Initially, Kids Friendly was a Council for World Mission pilot. In 2006, funding from the Presbyterian Foundation, Presbyterian Savings and Development Society and Dunedin Presbytery enabled Jill to launch it as a national ministry.

Jill says she has been fortunate to have had key people believe in Kids Friendly from

the start. "I had a wonderful manager in Rev John Daniel who encouraged me to go where the positive energy is. A mentor from the beginning, and all the way along, was the Very Rev Andrew Norton who advised me to 'just find my wings and fly', and I was given permission to take risks and try new things by Rev Martin Baker. Jenny McCullough generously shared her knowledge about raising up young leaders to help create Transformers. The Kids Friendly Champions were wonderful advocates who helped strategise with me in such creative ways. Dunedin Presbytery, the Synod and Wellington Presbytery were early supporters. So many people helped to make Kids Friendly the success it is."

Reflecting on change over the years, Jill says it has been wonderful to see the culture change in Kids Friendly churches where children are welcome.

She is already making plans for ways to include children in her new ministry. There's an idea for an inner city kids club.

One thing that will not change is Jill the Joy Bug's commitment to positivity. "With Kids Friendly I did my best to surround myself with the people who are lights. I have no time for negativity. I know I'm going to find a lot positive people in Auckland's inner city."

Jill Kayser will be lighting up Auckland City's inner streets from late January 2018. If you have a home in or close to the inner city that Jill, Paul and Dusty can rent, please phone 0272103784.

Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

Students' gathering at schools' conference a first



In his address to the Gathering and the Conference, White Ribbon New Zealand Ambassador the Very Rev Ray Coster said churches could be doing more to promote messages about respectful relationships.

This year's Presbyterian Church Schools' conference – and the inaugural Student Gathering that was held alongside it – demonstrated a willingness by Presbyterian youth to tackle some of the big issues of today's world.

The Presbyterian Church Schools' conference was held at Wellington's Scots College on August 10 and 11, under the 2017 theme, "Shalom – pathways to wholeness".

Principals, chaplains, and some school board members from the 12 Presbyterian schools in New Zealand attended, along with other Presbyterian Church representatives.

The annual conference has been held for many years, as an opportunity for schools and church leaders to connect with each other and reflect on what it means to be schools with a Christian ethos within the Presbyterian tradition.

What made the 2017 event different was the decision to run a parallel Student Gathering alongside the main conference. It was held at Te Aka Puaho's Te Kakano o te Aroha marae in Lower Hutt.

All Presbyterian schools were invited to send two Year 12 pupils to the Student Gathering, and 10 did so, with the teens staying on the marae overnight before travelling to the conference the next day to present their views.

Rev Sharon Ross Ensor, Director of the Presbyterian Church Schools' Resource Office, says the Student Gathering was a project developed for the schools by her office and Presbyterian Support under the PresCare banner. PresCare is a partnership between the Presbyterian

Church and Presbyterian Support. It looks for ways the two organisations, which share a faith and commitment, can respond to and nurture the wellbeing of children and families in Aotearoa.

PresCare Justice & Action

Themed "Justice and Action within a Christian ethos", the Gathering aimed to bring Presbyterian students together to better understand the biblical concept of shalom. It provided an opportunity for engagement around issues of social concern in New Zealand, particularly child poverty and family violence. PresCare publication, Justice & Action, which has a focus on these issues, was a source book for the Student Gathering. The students were also exposed to the work of Presbyterian Support, one of the country's largest social service agencies.

Each school is to be given a class set of the Justice & Action booklets for future use.

The Student Gathering was co-ordinated by Anne Overton, community relationship manager with Presbyterian Support Northern, assisted by local Presbyterian youth worker Brett Reid, and Scots College religious education teacher, Kate Jones.

Anne says it grew out of a conversation with Sharon around the delivery of a church gathering that would provide students with an opportunity to think more deeply on how social issues impact New Zealanders, and generate ideas around what the schools could do to help influence change.

"Child poverty and family violence are tough topics, but we believed that there would be some value in giving young people a voice. The booklet came out

of a workshop we ran in 2014 when we realised people didn't know what was happening in those spaces; PresCare was in a position to compile Justice & Action because of the work we do," Anne explains. "Discussing those issues at the Student Gathering provided greater understanding; we talked about ways the students could take the topics back to their schools and develop them.

"The feedback we had was tremendous. I think the students' hearts were touched."

White Ribbon Ambassador addresses conference

Delivering a keynote address both at the Gathering and the main conference was the Very Rev Ray Coster, a former Church Moderator and a current White Ribbon New Zealand Ambassador. The White Ribbon initiative seeks to end violence towards women, and White Ribbon Day is held annually on November 25.

Ray is currently living in the United Kingdom, and had been considering what he could do to mark White Ribbon Day in New Zealand when the opportunity arose to address the Student Gathering and conference. The issue was particularly topical, he says, because of the number of women speaking out against Hollywood movie executive Harvey Weinstein.

"Sadly, he is only one of many men who treat women disrespectfully. Anything we can do to encourage the men of the church especially, but men in general, to 'speak out' about threats, intimidation and violence by men on women and girls wherever they see it is crucial."

Ray believes he might be the only faith-based White Ribbon Ambassador in New



Those attending the Student Gathering enjoyed the experience of staying overnight on an urban marae.

Zealand, and his address to the Gathering was his first to Presbyterian youth in his capacity as White Ribbon Ambassador.

Working to the theme “The Shalom of Respectful Relationships”, he explained how violence was never an answer to a problem and showed recent studies of unacceptable relationships. “We have two tasks – not to be violent, but also to speak out when we see it,” he told the group.

Easy access to pornography, long-standing male dominance and patriarchal societies also played a part. There are areas where such dominance should be challenged, he suggested, such as in those churches where women still cannot speak, where views around men as head of the household are abused, and where a man still “gives” his daughter to be married.

“Is there more that churches could do to get the message across? Absolutely. I don’t think the churches are doing nearly enough.”

He says while most schools are working hard to develop respectful relationships in young people, it might take decades or generations for a new inner attitude to develop.

Two students who attended the gathering – St Kentigern College’s Laura Porteous and George Shirtcliffe – took the message back to their peers and school leaders.

Laura was touched by Ray’s messages around both family violence and poverty, and says the growing number of New Zealand children living in poverty affected her particularly deeply. “That may be because I spend a fair amount of time with children, this felt like an issue where I could really make a difference.”

Both students are currently working with Anne Overton and the head of service at their school to initiate increased efforts to address child poverty in their area.

“We have ideas such as tutoring students from lower decile schools for NCEA subjects, sending food technology students to give cooking classes, and others,” says George. “Our focus is to teach these students life skills as well as keeping up our current college donations, like the Foodbank we participate in.”

While plans forge ahead for next year’s Presbyterian Church Schools’ conference – to be held in Dunedin and hopefully include another Student Gathering – young Presbyterians are being given further opportunity to broaden their understanding of national and international issues.

Pursuing Peace Project

A curriculum project comprising a book entitled Pursuing Peace in Godzone, set to be published by Victoria University Press early next year, is being partnered with a series of short films around the same topic. The book challenges contemporary perceptions around the relationship between religion and violence.

The book is being compiled by Drs Geoff Troughton and Philip Fountain of Victoria University’s Religious Studies Department, and explores Christian contributions to peace-making in New Zealand.

“It is something of a first in that it looks at the commonly held view that religious diversity breeds violence. Conversations I have had with Sharon at the Presbyterian Church Schools’ Resource Office indicated there was an

interest in a project around peace and ethics,” Geoff explains.

He says the content features short, narrative-driven stories told in such a way that they will be accessible to a wide range of readers.

“The authors have given lively accounts of their personal experiences on the topic. We are not presuming that the readers know about Christianity, and have purposefully left out anything that looks like jargon, but that doesn’t mean we have stripped Christianity out completely. We have encouraged people to write from their own perspective.”

Sharon worked on developing resources for the project with both Geoff and Philip, Rev Dr Anne van Gend of the Anglican Schools’ Office, and with input via a workshop of teachers from Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and state schools. The short movies feature interviews with some of the authors of chapters in the book. These will be launched to coincide with the publication of the book and are intended to become a teaching resource for schools and other teaching environments.

“My office and the Anglican Schools’ Office are keen to support the use of the book within our church schools,” Sharon says. “The Presbyterian Church Schools office is funding the costs – mainly travel – associated with the production of the movies.

“Plans are to create a website which will include links to the movies, along with additional resources around many of the stories in the book, including NCEA Religious Studies Achievement Standards curriculum.”

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



Christ-based innovation

The Bible ends with a vision of creation restored and reconciled. At the heart is Jesus Christ – crucified, risen – announcing the making of all things new (Rev 21:5). This provides a way to understand Christ-based innovation.

Presbyterian theologian Michael Jinkins calls Christ-based innovation one of the most remarkable and vital hallmarks of our Reformed legacy. It is a way to make sense of the call of the Reformers to *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*, the Church always in need of being reformed. Presbyterians were innovators with the capacity to draw from the experience of ancient Christian communities in adapting to new situations, says Jinkins in *The Church Transforming: What's Next for the Reformation Project?* We are defined by our history as innovative as we participate in God's making of all things new.

Christ-based innovation is also a way of making sense of the mission of the Apostle Paul. Hallmarks of his ministry were the forming of multiple, diverse Christian communities. For Paul, this was innovation and was always coupled with risk. Paul wrote of how his Christ-based innovation risked the appearance of foolishness with the potential to upend religious, political and economic conventions of wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:20-25; 3:18-23). To proclaim Jesus is Lord, meant Caesar was not. To proclaim a

crucified saviour was to upend power and religious control and break retributive cycles of violence. To proclaim a risen Lord with a life now poured out for all who would receive him, was to re-order social relations, Jew and Gentile, women and men, slave and free. Innovation was a risky venture as it challenged established cultural patterns.

It was also a risky venture because it challenged established Church ways. We see this as Peter met Cornelius (Acts 10) and Paul met Peter (Galatians 2:11-14). The risks echo through history, as Luther, Calvin and Knox met the established Church. Today, much of our Presbyterian polity is designed to protect the gains made by earlier eras of innovation, particularly the new impetus that resulted from the Reformation innovations. However, in consolidating gains of the past, we can become closed to ongoing attempts to respond to the call of Christ making all things new. We show favour to what we already know over the unknown, uncertain and unconventional.

As Presbyterian churches, we need to own that innovation and those risking a new thing will be misunderstood. It will feel like they are challenging the status quo. They will not meet people's current expectations. They will risk being isolated and left to carry things alone. They will risk exposure, unfair criticism

and potentially the shame of apparent lack of success.

So if we are to be churches that create conditions for the risk of Christ-based innovations, we will need to lay hold of another of our great Reformed hallmarks - that of grace. Overflowing grace along with risk is at the heart of innovating. We are always in grace, for Christ-based innovation is birthed out of gifts given and received.

Grace for innovation givers involves the freedom to try new things and be generous when there is stumbling. This includes being supportive with compliments and ready to revise metrics about success and progress.

Grace for innovation receivers includes being faithful stewards of the gifts of generosity, freedom and support. It will mean reporting on progress and sharing stories of what God is up to in the midst of innovation.

In the grace of risk and innovation, givers and receivers will find themselves as disciples, learning to draw from the experiences of ancient communities, like Paul and the Reformers, in the making of all things new.

– Rev Dr Mark Johnston, Auckland Co-ordinator, Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership and Rev Dr Steve Taylor, Principal, Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

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Church promotes youth wellbeing



Paul Humphreys and Ruth Troughton were among the presenters at the Cashmere Conference on youth wellbeing.

Tackling the tough issue of youth suicide was an easy decision for Cashmere Presbyterian Church, Christchurch, when they recently hosted youth wellbeing seminars.

Cashmere minister, the Rev Silvia Purdie explains that the idea for the suicide prevention workshops came from conversations with young people in the congregation.

“People we know were asking for help about what to do when a close friend makes a disclosure about wanting to harm themselves.”

Two workshops were delivered: one was for parents and caregivers of teens, and the other for teenagers.

Just over 40 young people attended the teen seminar, which aimed at resourcing young people with strategies to support wellbeing and resilience. It also sought to equip them to support their peers if a friend shows signs of self-harming.

The perception that talking about suicide can lead to suicide is a myth that Paul Humphreys, facilitator of the teen session, is keen to bust. Rather, he says, asking intentional questions can be a pathway to keeping someone safe.

Paul introduced the idea of “mental health sustainers”—a series of intentional questions—from the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) programme. Participants learnt about how to provide “suicide first aid” to an at-risk person and also spent time examining signs that things may not be quite right with their friends.

It was a lot of work to jam into a four-hour session, but the attendees were really engaged with the series of activities and the “raw but real questions” says Paul.

Aaron Purdie, 17, attended the teen workshop and says that he is now more aware of the “little things” like changes in behaviour or habits that can indicate that something is amiss.

Feedback from others who attended indicated that they had learnt more about “breaking down the wall for discussing difficult topics” and felt better equipped to help their friends if they needed it.

The community seminar was attended by around 50 parents, grandparents and carers of teenagers. They discussed the risks, warning signs and symptoms of self-harming behaviour, and provided practical suggestions about what could be done.

Inspiration for the content of the seminars came from Paul who is an experienced suicide prevention training facilitator and recently moved back to New Zealand from the States. For 15 years’ he worked as a programme director at Presbyterian

Church USA (PCUSA) Camp and Conference Centres, where he designed and implemented outdoor ministry programmes and served the church in various ways including starting intentional young adult communities.

Paul was inspired to get more involved in supporting teens during difficult times after tiring of “picking up the pieces”. Many youth pastors and young people are experiencing difficult times in the USA, he says.

Paul believes that prayer alone isn’t enough, and that practical support to get people “safe-for-now” is just as important.

“There is so much desperation in our communities. I think the church needs to do a better job of helping practically in the community, rather than being the ambulance at bottom of the cliff.”

Mental health experts from the Canterbury District Health Board reported at the Cashmere seminars that referrals to Christchurch specialist services for youth who were having self-harming thoughts or behaviours, were trending upwards. Referrals for young people affected by depression and anxiety are also on the rise in the district.

Paul explains that research evidence points to the loss of hope and the loss of social connections as core reasons behind people self-harming. And among the factors that can protect young people against suicide are having a secure cultural identity, access to support and help, family and community support or connectedness, and an ability to deal with life’s difficulties and hopefulness.

Silvia says that the seminar has reinforced the importance of youth ministry as a source of support and belonging for young people, and has strengthened Cashmere’s resolve as a congregation to develop a new youth group.

“We want to offer an experience of genuine community. We want to be present with people during the good times, and in the hard moments. God is in the midst of life. We can offer a positive, hopeful and creative response.

“Hope comes from bringing people together and strangers connecting and finding things in common. This is an important thing about who we are, what we do and why we do it.”

If you want to talk to someone about youth wellbeing issues, assistance is available at Youthline, phone 0800 37 66 33 or text 234 or visit their website: www.youthline.co.nz

Jose Reader Spanz

Free retreats refresh spirit



Mark and Heather Chapman offer the gift of free Restoration Retreats in their rural Clevedon home for anyone in Presbyterian Church ministry leadership.

A minister's role is focused on serving others, but ministers also need to be nurtured. Restoration Retreats offered by the Chapmans' of Clevedon provide space and time for renewal and rest.

Mark Chapman was minister of Clevedon Presbyterian Church for 40 years. During his long tenure he witnessed many ministers reaching breaking point around year five.

"There's so much pressure, from conflicting theologies, being 24/7 with no clearly defined function," says Mark. "The job description is nebulous. I watched ministers dropping out and marriages breaking up because of the high expectations."

Mark and his wife Heather offer space in their rural Clevedon home for anyone in Presbyterian Church ministry leadership, with all meals provided. The two-to-four-day Restoration Retreats in the couple's early 20th century villa are informal and free, thanks to an anonymous sponsor.

Rev Andrew Scott says he came away from his few days in the Chapmans' care with the beginnings of recovery from burn-out. Minister of Dunedin's Brockville Church since 2005, Andrew was asking himself "how did I get here?"

"Aside from lots of sleeping, I had significant conversations with Mark, exploring ministry and my motivations. I could say 'this happened' and he immediately knew from his own experience what I meant. I also felt incredibly welcome and cared for. There

was no performance required. I didn't have to be anyone or anything."

Rev Caleb Hardie was drawn to the retreat as a means of processing a challenging situation he had faced with his parish and within himself.

"I'm a bit of a sprinter in body and mind," says Caleb. "It's not easy as a young minister to butt heads with the Church. You tend to come off second best. I leapt at the opportunity to gain some pearls of wisdom from Mark."

On arrival, Caleb discovered Mark had already picked out two helpful books from his large library of resources. The two men took walks, shared conversations and stories.

"Mark's a wonderful listener. He's incredibly affirming and encouraging," says Caleb. "He shared his own struggles with long tenure in a parish, how to take the long view, build up capacity and deal with powerbrokers."

Caleb's stay coincided with one of Auckland's intense downpours. He woke up one morning to see Mark and Heather rescuing a sheep stranded by the swollen river. What happened next proved a pivotal point in his retreat journey.

"I ran out to help, jumped the fence and acted far too quickly, frightening the poor sheep and making things worse," Caleb explains. "Mark suggested I write a theological reflection on the parallels. It was a powerful tool and release."

The Chapmans willingly take retreatants to a service at Clevedon Church, and to

local beaches and sightseeing. Partners are welcome to participate in retreats. For Rory and Andrea Grant from Timaru, the few days away with no agenda provided time out from two young children, a chance to rest and to be fed and nurtured by Heather.

"I was just about to start nine weeks' study leave and was feeling tired and run down," says Rory. "The retreat enabled me to enter my study time spiritually refreshed. Mark and Heather are generous hosts and loving people."

Mark believes ministers are often reluctant to admit they are having a crisis of faith or need help and that the Church, in adopting more of a business model, is somewhat disconnected from the essentially mystical nature of ministry, and is unduly suspicious of anything outside its own accountability structure.

"Ministry is not a doing job, it's a being done-to-by-God job. My sense of calling now is to help ministers reconnect with the belief that God is at work in their life despite a crisis of faith or a small congregation," he says. "And I remember the best kind of help I got in those early years was not from the presbytery but informally from older ministers. I could let it all hang out in confidence."

The Chapmans also offer paid mentoring, leaders' retreats and conferences. To discuss a Restoration Retreat or to book in, phone Mark Chapman on 027 292 9714 or 09 292 8608 or get in touch via their website www.avalonministries.co.nz

Jade Reidy [Spanz](#)

MAHURANGI PLAN TO BE COMMUNITY'S CENTRE



Burgeoning community connections and growth that would delight many a local church is the inspiration for Mahurangi Presbyterian's new building project.

Sometime around the middle of 2018, Mahurangi Presbyterian hopes work can start on a new church and community centre building at their Warkworth base, which is likely to cost almost \$13 million.

It's an ambitious project aimed at delivering a church big enough for the growing congregation as well as providing community space. Plans include a commercial creche, classrooms, café, an auditorium and a gymnasium, which will house a full-sized basketball court.

Such versatility is key to answering the needs of the local community, says Mahurangi Presbyterian Church minister Nick McLennan, as the congregation of 300 has outgrown the original church building.

"On Sundays, I run two services for over 250 people. We can't squeeze any more in, and we need to prepare for future growth."

The church has been a significant part of the community for over 160 years. Mahurangi Presbyterian is believed to be the fourth oldest church in the former Auckland Presbytery area. From the start, the church was deeply embedded in the heart of community life, starting both the local school and library, and offering a support network for local residents.

"We have continued to build on that legacy through our community work," says Nick. "The church is now involved with several different cultural groups in our community – Tongan, Kiribati, Tuvaluan and Samoan. We run a number of programmes that support them and their integration into the country, from ESOL [English as a Second Language] to computer classes and Bible studies."

A community worker employed through Mahu Vision Community Trust provides migrants with support and advocacy for issues like education, legal matters or dealing with government agencies explains Nick.

A range of community groups operate out of the current premises says parish manager Roger Mackay.

"This building is generally in use every day of the week. Some groups are church-led like the foodbank, the furniture bank or our after-school programmes. Others like Literacy Auckland North and Aged Concern utilise our buildings for their courses, and we are a worship venue for various other denominations."

As the need has grown, so too have plans to address it. Initially the idea was to extend the original church, but that wasn't considered a viable option.

"For over 15 years, the congregation has had a vision to build a facility that served the various community ministries of the church. The rationale was that if significant money was to be spent on property, then that property would have to serve the mission of Jesus to our community. A building designed for Sunday worship alone was considered inappropriate," says Nick.

After purchasing the one-hectare site along the Mahurangi River in 2014, the church engaged an architect to prepare concept drawings. Following an internal congregation workshop and a community sports and recreation workshop initiated by Auckland Council, it was decided to increase the size and footprint of the building to make it more community-compatible into the future.

With inflationary cost escalations and the increased area, the total building project cost estimate – which includes the land purchase – is now likely to be closer to \$13 million rather than the originally estimated \$10.5 million.

Funding the new complex has brought its own reward, say Nick and Roger.

"God has been very gracious to us. We have been amazed at the generosity of our congregation who have contributed approximately \$4 million towards the cost of the project and land. What we find incredible is that despite these contributions, the church has continued to financially support and expand both local and overseas ministries."

The sale of the existing church property is expected to realise a further \$2 million; there is also access to a commercial loan of \$1 million for the planned childcare early education facility.

"Our capital campaign fundraising target has increased as a result of the cost estimate escalation, and we are embracing



Kiribati Community chairperson Etitara Tumo, centre, is pictured at the annual Pasifika Festival which Mahurangi Presbyterian sponsor. The Kiribati community is looking forward to a new larger church space as they use the current building for worship, family celebrations, meetings and dance.



Mahurangi Presbyterian Church minister Nick McLennan says the church plans to build to “serve the mission of Jesus to our community”. The church “is a safe place for families to meet and learn together, for children to run around, and where people gather to worship God”.



charity organisations who support projects with significant community benefit,” Nick says. “Our plan is to achieve 80 percent of the campaign target within six months to align with the construction start date.”

He says the church initially approached PressGo for advice; they suggested bringing in a professional capital campaign fundraising expert.

“This helped us prepare a Capital Fundraising Resources Study through a proactive independent process within our church and local external community. PressGo kindly assisted us with a \$15,000 grant for this professional study that helped us get started. Since then, we have established a formal capital campaign plan with a team of internal volunteers, and have set up a number of task forces focused on raising funds from various sources.”

Nick says he hopes a start can be made on building in May or June next year.

With plans forging ahead, there is a sense of excitement in the air. The area is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country, and the shortage of facilities suited to large community gatherings has long been acknowledged.

Nick believes one of Mahurangi Presbyterian’s key values is its importance as a place of refuge, one that is a safe place for families to meet and learn together, for children to run around, and where people gather to worship God.

“For many of our recent arrivals, this is generally how churches operate in their home countries. As I see it, a facility that is designed to incorporate faith and life in this way not only fits in with our immigrant communities, but it can also become a place of refuge for many others in our society who are looking for a safe place to belong.”

There is a strong contingent of families from Kiribati in the Mahurangi community. The Kiribati Uniting Church operates out of Mahurangi Presbyterian Church every Sunday afternoon, and also use the premises for family celebrations, meetings and Pasifika Festival dance practices. Mahurangi Church members have visited Kiribati several times, sending youth and providing training and supplies for their pre-school organisation.

Many of the local Kiribati are employed with Southern Paprika Ltd. The company’s founder and managing director Hamish Alexander says if Kiribati people were not a strong part of Warkworth’s community, all the local churches would feel their loss keenly.

“We are very dependent upon them, and because of the people they are, they will certainly make good use of the facility being planned by Mahurangi Presbyterian,” he says.

Joe Koppens, Warkworth Rotary president, wholeheartedly agrees. He is involved with the food rescue programme that for the past 15 months has been collecting food that might otherwise go to waste, and distributing it to families in need. He says support from Mahurangi Presbyterian is key to getting around two tonnes of food each month to where it is most needed.

“Having access to additional storage space in the new facility would enable us to expand that. The programme is very successful and makes a substantial difference to the lives of many in Warkworth.”

An even closer connection is enjoyed between the church and Mahurangi College. Once the new building is up and running, the school will be nearer to the church and those bonds are likely to strengthen further. Principal David Macleod said two youth workers from Mahurangi Presbyterian work with the school, and many students enjoy youth activities at the church.

“And as part of the annual Kowhai Festival in Warkworth, the church sponsors an annual Pasifika Festival which is held at Mahurangi College and at which most of our Pasifika students and their families perform.”

Gary Diprose, director of Springboard Community Works – an organisation that helps regenerate communities – has worked closely with Mahurangi Church for some time. He says having the new facility will serve only to add to that co-operative effort and will be most welcome. “Much of what they do aligns with the work Springboard does, and their strong base can only benefit this area.”

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



Mila Kim and Rev Chung Man, Cho at the Korean Presbyterian Church in Henderson. Behind them is a Korean translation of Psalm 20.

Korean Presbyterians **connect** with their community

The Korean Presbyterian Church has been in Auckland for 30 years, and is increasingly making its presence felt in the Henderson community.

Tucked away behind the Heritage Falls Hotel in Henderson, the Church's home is a sprawling ex-factory and fitness centre that they moved into 15 years ago. Around 250 members of the 400-strong congregation attend Sunday service here and stay for lunch in the café.

During the last school holidays in October, the building resonated with the voices of 20 children at play in the Church's new Oscar holiday programme. Oscar is a nation-wide Ministry of Social Development programme for accredited organisations. It stands for Out of School Care and Recreation, and is designed for children aged 5-13.

Mila Kim is one of three women who staff the programme. "We encouraged our members to do this together," she says. "Koreans don't mix much and they are shy to try new things, but we now feel comfortable to deliver this Oscar programme."

The Church has long offered a cultural school for the Kiwi-born Koreans who grow up without learning to speak Korean. The congregation also opens its doors to the Myanmar Church to use their chapel and to other cultural groups for activities such as tae kwon do that "add local spice" says Minister Rev Chung Man, Cho. When Rev Cho took up his position

three years ago he decided they should work towards greater outreach with their communities.

"Before starting Oscar, we did a lot of research around the local schools to see what they are offering and what's needed," says Mila. "We also asked advice from St Helier's Church because they operate an Oscar programme."

The Korean Church's building was already an approved space, so the major challenge was all the paperwork required for accreditation.

"There are so many regulations!" Mila exclaims. "But they protect us and the kids so it's a safe, fun place to be."

Oscar places no restrictions on teaching values and Rev Cho says their programme is church-based, but with minimal Bible time. It is not mandatory for the children who attend to be Christian.

Mila says she found the two-week, every day programme tiring but rewarding. "They were a little bit naughty at first, getting used to being together. But we survived. And it's fulfilling to see the kids smile. Their thanks is enough."

During term time, the after-school programme is more academic. "We do activities with the children," says Rev Son's wife Soonhee Yang. "And help them with their homework. Koreans are naturally good at maths so this is a subject we can especially help with."

Many of the Kiwi-born Korean children don't speak their parent's mother tongue.

"This was a big surprise to me," says Mila. "I feel our kids lack confidence in their identity, who they are. It affects their academic success and their careers. We try to make it clear that it's okay to speak Korean here."

So far, the children attending the Oscar programme are mainly Korean, but Rev Cho plans to extend it to local "Westies" next year. The "final destination" for the Church's outreach is to work together with local support agencies to tap into children from broken families, who most need love and healing.

Along with inviting the community in, the church financially supports the west Auckland community through its relationship with Presbyterian Support Northern. Community relationship manager Anne Overton says the Korean Church is deeply generous but finds it hard to know where and how to start.

"I've had many conversations over the years to encourage them. They're an amazing group," she reflects. "Whenever we put the call out their response is so fast and generous, whether it's for a truck load of nappies or a dozen safety gates for families in need."

The Church has also supplied toiletry packs for Waitakere Hospital to give to elderly in-patients who have no family support.

"We love working with them. They have beautiful hearts," Anne says.

Jade Reidy [Spanz](#)

KIDS

stream into Presbytery Central Gathering



Twenty-three children from 10 Presbytery Central churches participated in Kidstream, a one day programme at Central's Gathering.

Here's the dilemma: what do you do when you really want to make space for children at Presbytery Central's twice-yearly Gathering in Wellington?

If you're Rev Allister Lane, minister of St John's in the City, you create a parallel programme for children, allowing the whole family to attend the Gathering.

That's what happened from 18 to 20 August, when Allister and his team created Kidstream, a day-long programme for 23 children from 10 churches in Presbytery Central's catchment area of the lower North Island.

"The aim of Kidstream was for the kids to have a spiritual experience but also to have a lot of fun, connect with other Presbyterian kids and for the whole family of God to be present," says Allister who had two of his own children attend the day.

Allister says discussions about including children in the Gathering began as far back as six years ago when he realised there was a cost to family life of attending the event, with parents having to find alternative caregivers for their children or not attend at all.

He called on the Wellington Boys & Girls Institute (BGI) to help run Kidstream because of their experience of leading holiday programmes with a spiritual element.

"The plan was for the kids to join us for worship on the Saturday morning, then go to the BGI next door for a day of themed activities and then join us again for worship at the end of the day."

Helen Craig, the BGI's community kitchen co-ordinator, says the theme

for Kidstream was the not very well known story of Thomas McKenzie, one of Wellington's first Pakeha settlers, who unwittingly broke tapu and was threatened with death by a Maori chief. As it turned out, Thomas' life was saved only because the chief's daughter-in-law, Ruhia, cast her cloak on him, rendering him taboo.

"Thomas then went on to do a lot of great work with youth," says Helen.

As part of Kidstream, the children were taken to Te Papa to see Ruhia's sacred cloak. They also devised a play about Thomas' life which they presented to the adults at the afternoon worship.

"We also had a cooking class, making pancakes for morning tea and filled rolls for lunch," says Helen.

Rev Mo Morgan, minister of St James Whanganui, was part of the team who helped organise the Gathering, and two of her three children attended. "When Allister first suggested that we bring our kids along to the Gathering, I thought it was a great idea," says Mo. "Kids are part of the family of God and for them to be absent was like missing a limb."

In total, six children from her church attended, along with two children's workers and one elder. "Having a kids programme also meant that our children's workers could participate. Usually they have to run the kids programme but having the BGI do this freed them up to attend."

Mo says the feedback she received from parents and children has been overwhelmingly positive.

"People loved the fact they were able to attend the Gathering as a family. Children are a key part of the church and their presence, their vitality and their voice plays an important role in the life of our Church."

Allister agrees, saying he was pleased with the way the Gathering and Kidstream worked and the positive feedback he received.

"It was a humble beginning but a new direction for us. It worked so well that we want to build on it and see it happen again at the next Gathering. Obviously Kidstream will have a different flavour each time, depending on where it is held and the facilities available. It's a big challenge to be able to engage a range of ages, but it's a matter of thinking creatively about what will work for the kids and how we can include them in our worship."

Allister also believes there is scope to roll out the initiative nationally, not just for other Gatherings but also for events like the Church's General Assembly.

"We were innovating within arms reach and had the resources and people to help achieve this. But it's definitely something that I can see working both at a regional and national level."

Sharon Stephenson [Spanz](#)

FROM MODERATOR'S HOUSE PAINTER TO VICE PRESIDENT OF MYANMAR



Moderator Rt Rev Richard Dawson and Vice President of Myanmar Henry Van Thio outside the Myanmar Parliament buildings in Naypyidaw. Richard was in Myanmar in October 2017 to represent the PCANZ at the Christian Conference of Asia conference in Yangon, Myanmar.

When Henry Van Thio took on a number of casual jobs in Dunedin and Otago, including shifts at the freezing works, fruit picking and painting the Moderator's house, he had no idea that he would soon be appointed Vice President of Myanmar.

The catalyst for the former Major in the Burmese Army to move to Dunedin was a study opportunity. Henry accompanied his wife Anna Sui when she took up a theology PhD scholarship at University of Otago in 2011. While in Dunedin, Henry, Anna and their three children attended the church where Moderator Rt Rev Richard Dawson is minister, St Stephens/Leith Valley Presbyterian Church.

Henry and family returned to Myanmar early 2015. Henry says that Anna Sui "is now lecturing. She completed her PhD through the wonderful support of Otago University and the Department of Religious Studies there and has graduated".

In the historic 2015 Myanmar elections, Henry won a seat in the country's upper house for the Chin State. Nobel peace prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy Party, won a majority in both houses. Henry, who is a member of the party, was sworn in as the Second Vice President on 30 March 2016.

Henry's appointment came not only as a surprise to him but also to many in Myanmar as he has not had a long political career. The country's political pundits speculated that this could be the reason he was elected. Henry has his own ideas on why he was chosen for Vice President. "I understand that I was considered trustworthy and a person with a broad experience of life and of people. I think these were important in my selection."

Surprise at his appointment also stemmed from his being from an ethnic and religious minority; Henry is an ethnic Chin and a Christian. He is the first Christian and the first non-Buddhist to hold the office of Vice President of Myanmar. The majority religion in Myanmar is Buddhism with 87.9 per cent of the population identifying as Buddhist in the 2014 Myanmar Census. Buddhist nationalist monks protested Henry's appointment

and called for only Buddhists to be allowed to hold political positions. His response to those who think he should not be allowed to hold office is to "continue to treat all people as equal and valuable".

As a member of an ethnic minority, his appointment has meant a great deal to the Chin people. He says, "The Chin people have been very proud that I have this position. The main thing I have sought to contribute through my belonging to the Chin people has been unity and understanding."

Most Chin people are Christians and follow Protestant religion. Henry grew up in a Christian family and describes himself as "Christian from childhood". His faith has supported him throughout his life. "I have always treated everyone as a child of God and as valuable regardless of their faith. This has been the most important thing."

Since independence, Myanmar, which has many ethnic groups, has experienced much ethnic strife. Since August 2017, the UN estimates that the Rohingya crisis has seen over 600,000 people cross the border to Bangladesh from Buddhist majority Rakhine State. Reports from media and humanitarian groups state that the Rohingya Muslim refugees have been driven out by a military clearance operation and that atrocities may have occurred. Aung San Suu Kyi has been criticised internationally for failing to speak out more strongly.

Henry says the crisis is, "A very complex situation which we are working hard to resolve. We have invited and are looking forward to having the Secretary-General of the UN visit and see the situation for himself. Already former Secretary Kofi Annan has been very helpful.

"This tragedy has complex historical origins and will require significant care and resources to fix but we hope that the media will take a balanced view of things while we are working towards this."

A promising development has seen China step up and offer to play a constructive role in resolving the Rakhine State crisis through a 3-stage solution beginning with a ceasefire.

Angela Singer [Spanz](#)



Bush mission inspires action



The Rev Dr Carlton Johnstone, pictured left with his wife and children, led a team of eight from Wakatipu Presbyterian Church to a bush mission on the island of Santo.

The first Kiwi Presbyterian group to visit a remote bush mission station in Vanuatu returned home with a thirst to do more there, despite the physically demanding conditions.

Urulu, a bush mission station near the large village of Morakauri on the island of Santo, was the destination for the eight-person team from Wakatipu Presbyterian Church.

The journey to Urulu was not easy. A couple of hours bouncing along dirt tracks in a truck was followed by a walk of two and a half hours.

Youngest team member, Holly Johnstone, 4, only needed the odd piggy-back says her father the Rev Dr Carlton Johnstone, who is part of the Wakatipu ministry team and led and organised the trip. Carlton's wife, Sarah, and seven-year-old son Max were also part of the team.

Santo is Vanuatu's largest island, and only 40 percent of its 40,000 residents live in the main town, Luganville. The remainder live in villages, some of which are in remote and rugged bush on the inner part of the island.

The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu's (PCV) bush mission programme provides aid workers, teachers and pastors to those living in these isolated villages.

PCV also runs a mission farm which is located near Talua Theological College in Luganville. The Wakatipu team spent the first few days of their visit on the farm where villagers learn agricultural skills and grow crops for food and income. Building skills are also taught.

While Global Mission has financially supported the Santo bush mission for many years, Global Mission Co-ordinator

Rev Phil King had been looking for some time for the right parish to partner with it.

"Wakatipu is the first to take up the opportunity to get involved, and it seems that it's been a really good fit for them," says Phil.

The team came back with several ideas for future trips and will work with PCV and Global Mission to determine what projects they can help with.

"We were really impressed with Pastor Tueni and the bush mission team. They impressed us with their commitment to the people, and their passion for God and the depth of the mission," says Carlton.

Living conditions at Urulu were basic. The team slept in a hut on raised bamboo mats and ate taro, rice and other traditional foods, which they often helped prepare alongside villagers. Bathing was via a bucket of cold water in an enclosed stall, which Tony Robertson – another of the Wakatipu team – likened to what he had seen on the M*A*S*H TV show.

While the trip was physically demanding, Tony says he and wife Wina also found it very rewarding.

He found just "being" and "learning to be at peace with yourself without the distractions of phones, TV and technology" a challenge and highlight.

While they didn't do as much work as they expected, there was value in just being there, says Carlton.

"Simply being present in the village created opportunities for conversations. We listened and shared in each others' faith journey stories."

In this way, says Carlton, Paul's words to the Romans reflects the team's experience

when Paul writes about wanting to see them encourage their faith, as well as be encouraged by others.

One of the other highlights for the team was leading a service in a new church that was officially opened by the Santo Presbytery shortly after they left.

"We got a sneak preview," says Carlton who led worship for Urulu bush mission workers and people from nearby Morakauri village. Worship was a collaborative effort, he says, with locals leading parts of the service in Bislama, and members of the Wakatipu team leading some of the prayers and singing.

The visit to Santo is part of Wakatipu's expanding global mission work. Wakatipu includes a Brazilian congregation, and two members of that group – Roberto Dos Santos and Gina Dos Santos (not related) joined the mission trip embodying the Wakatipu philosophy of one church, multiple congregations.

Roberto – a former professional soccer player – quickly built a rapport with local children by playing soccer with them. Carlton believes having children as part of the mission team was really valuable, because their openness and the different dynamic they brought to the group played an important part in breaking down barriers with locals.

The team challenge other churches to take intergenerational teams on cross-cultural mission, says Carlton.

"It demonstrates that all ages can play a part, forming relationships across generations through shared experience and ministry."

Jose Reader [Spanz](#)



MAKE HOPE my story



Sujatha [centre] pictured with her sister and daughter [right], was elected as local council president and advocates for the needs of Dalit and Adivasi in her village.

Christmas is a time for stories. In Scripture, we read Isaiah's ancient words of promise and the gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus. We find ourselves in this narrative of hope – a story with the peace of Christ at its centre. The hope is for the world God loves, a hope that can be seen in the sharing of bread and resources, people standing alongside the most vulnerable and speaking out for justice.

In the 72nd Christmas Appeal, Christian World Service invites your support so local partners can turn hardship and intolerable circumstances into stories of hope. With a few tools, some seeds and expert guidance, a poor family can grow a rich variety of foods that will have immediate benefit. With expert training, a panchayat president can install streetlights or protect community land, improving the lives of the whole village.

When her husband died four years ago, Sujatha Ramesh knew she could do his job. For years, he had served as the panchayat or local council president for the small village of Poothur in South India. As a Dalit (formerly known as untouchable) Christian, he had worked hard, challenging the local landowners and government officials in an effort to improve the lives of everyone. Sujatha had watched and learned. She knew if she did not step up, her vulnerable community would lose all that he had achieved. When the time came, she put her name forward and chose her campaign team. She chose well. Her daughter and sister steered her to a well-deserved victory.

Very conscious of her responsibilities to those who voted for her, she takes on

the tough issues facing the community. She meets villagers on the streets and in her office. Where she can, she tells them about government entitlements or where to go for support. Some of their concerns go on to the panchayat agenda, where elected officials seek to resolve grievances and implement new programmes. In four years in office, she has learnt how to manage the relationship with the local collector, who as government appointed chief executive holds the key to local resources and information, and implemented a significant health programme.

Sujatha keeps panchayat meetings on track and argues vigorously when needed. The power of the panchayat may be limited, but she is determined to do what she can for the local community, whether demanding improved access to water or trying to stop illegal sandmining.

The state of Tamil Nadu was one of the first to adopt new government legislation reserving 33 per cent (and now 50 per cent) of panchayat seats for women. Seats are allocated for Dalit and Adivasi or indigenous people.

CWS partner, the Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation (HRF), has played a critical role in supporting these excluded groups to stand for election and training those elected. Without representation, powerful interests in their villages take community assets and discriminate against the poorest people. By training women presidents, they have been able to stop some of these challenges.

Since the first women were elected in 1996, HRF has trained and supported over 2,000

presidents thanks to your support for the Christmas Appeal. The initial training covers their roles, responsibilities and powers under the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994.

The programme looks at women in governance; gender equity; child rights including education and the prevention of child labour and trafficking; access to justice, social security, scholarships and pensions; protecting natural resources; climate change; disaster risk reduction and management; village resource mapping and natural resource statistics. With this training, they can improve their leadership and secure basic entitlements for women, Dalit and Adivasi communities. Challenging illegal prawn farms on public lands, restoring contaminated water sources and stopping the theft of panchayat lands can be dangerous. Importantly, when individuals or communities are attacked or killed, HRF offers legal and other advice.

Expert groups like HRF are on the cutting edge of democracy, lobbying for people's rights, supporting people to participate in decisions about their community and upholding the rights of women, children, Dalits and Adivasi.

Please support the 2017 Christmas Appeal so our 25 partners can support vulnerable people to find food, water, dignity and justice. *Working together, we can make hope our story!*

You can find resources on the 2017 Christmas Appeal or make a donation at <http://christmasappeal.org.nz/>

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a red shirt and colorful beaded bracelets, is raising her right hand in a classroom setting. She has a curious and attentive expression. In the background, other children are visible, some with their hands raised.

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MY STORY**

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- Retirement living options
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To find out more about Enliven services in your area call our regional offices:

Upper North Island	0800 365 4836
East Coast	(06) 877 8193
Lower North Island	0800 36 54 83
Upper South Island	(03) 366 5472
South Canterbury	(03) 687 1120
Otago	(03) 477 7115
Southland	(03) 211 8200