

# Spanz



Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

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Discerning  
the way

forward  
General  
Assembly

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# Supported in letting go God is good...all the time!

**There is nothing that prepares you for the news that you are going to lose your job. Is it any different when it is a calling? Not as far as I could see when the news came.**

When the Otago Peninsula Presbyterian Parish (OPPP) Andersons Bay Presbyterian Church decided dissolution was the best way forward for the ongoing issues of dwindling numbers, dwindling finances and earthquake-prone buildings, my sense of failure and loss was huge. The Commission told me that it had nothing to do with me. The congregation had made the decision and presbytery would help to facilitate the way forward. During this time a parishioner said to me that his head was saying one thing and his heart was saying another. In the end it needed to be a head decision. The heart would only get in the way.

After the date for dissolution was decided, I still had six Sundays to prepare services for. How do you find the strength to prepare services when your congregation has voted not to continue? Did you know that when a well is empty, the only way for it to fill up again is to dig deeper? So that is what I did. By the grace of God, I was able to dig deeper.

Thank goodness for supervision! My supervisor made herself available to me 24/7. I would text, email, call or pop in to see her whenever I needed. With Wendy's guidance and reflective ear I survived this challenge and have come out stronger.

Three years after dissolution, Wendy is still my supervisor.

During turbulent times in a ministry, having a wise and capable session clerk is like finding gold. Oftentimes the session clerk has the dual role of being the ear to the minister as well as the mouth- piece of the congregation. This time was no different. I was truly blessed throughout the whole dissolution process to have a competent and supportive session clerk. Claire was an integral part of the seamless transition for the congregation during and after dissolution. Claire was also my rock.

When there is a death in the family, a marriage break-up, a miscarriage or any loss, people don't always know what to say. So they say nothing at all. Dissolution is a huge loss for all involved. Silence is not helpful. Those people who took the time to acknowledge the difficult place I was in have helped me to heal.

The sense of grief still lingers. Every time I drive past the Andersons Bay Presbyterian Church, I am reminded of the pain of loss. It too, is just a shell of what it used to be. It is no longer the church in the finger game of my younger days: *"Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors, see all the people."* Without the people, the church is just a building.



Rev Alofa Lale

At the end of the second-to-last service at OPPP, I invited church families to come forward, one by one. They picked up a plastic container and I filled it with dirt and gave them a daffodil bulb to plant in the container. There were hugs and tears. This was the embodiment of the verse that was our focus during the dissolution process – John 12:24: *"I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains."*

Three years on, the daffodils are in full bloom again! Worship at Portobello continues. Now and then a rainbow appears in the sky and we are reminded of God's promise. For God is good! All the time! And all the time God is good!

Rev Alofa Lale is the Mission Coordinator at Mercy Hospital, Dunedin.

– The Andersons Bay Presbyterian Church, Dunedin parish was dissolved in 2015.

## Who we are

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## MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

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



## Places of Hope

**This is my last contribution to SPANZ as Moderator and, as has been my habit, I want to make it something encouraging – something that will embody the hope we have in Christ.**

Dr Nicholas Schaser says this of hope: “English often use[s] the word ‘hope’ to express speculative desires – ‘I hope that I get the job,’ or ‘I hope we win this game’”. In these contexts, we invoke ‘hope’ as we close our eyes, cross our fingers, and wait for the best possible conclusion to an unsure situation, but this is not what the Bible means when it speaks of hope. In Hebrew, ‘hope’ is associated with God, so that the term expresses *confidence*, not in a future outcome, but in a present divine strength.”

So let me offer a little bit of the view of the Church I’ve been privileged to receive as Moderator over the last 18 months. A bird’s eye view is precisely one of the gifts the position offers to those in it. One is exposed to all the various parts of the Church and to its real life at street level, so to speak. And this is what I see...

The task of being the Church and, indeed, of creating a church has never been more counter-cultural, in my lifetime at least. It has become harder, but as this has happened the character of Christian fellowship and the fundamental requirements of it have been thrown into sharper relief. Here are seven things that I believe are highlighted by that dynamic and which I believe are reasons for hope.

1. The preciousness of those who share our common belief and the need for us to recognise how much we have in common – even if we disagree about some things.

Nothing should prevent us from loving our brother or sister, no matter how wrong we think they are. We are a people of hope. We love, without prejudice, our sisters and brothers in the faith.

2. The enormous value of young people and our great need to throw resources at welcoming and discipling them.

Jesus blessed the children brought to him. He did this with no other age group. I am astounded that we do not consider it a key priority to bring our children into the faith and make our faith communities places of welcome to them.

3. The huge value of those who can continue the task of discipling those same young people once they get into teenage years – our youth leaders, and those who train them, are vital to our basic mission.
4. The fundamental role that concrete presence plays in both the pastoral task of the Church and the community-building role.

Being pastoral means fundamentally “being with” people.

5. The importance of being a broad church and of appealing more widely than is currently the case.

We need our ideas tested and re-tested because being wrong is one thing we all have in common.

6. The pivotal role our ordained leaders play in our Church and our great need to both train them in the fundamentals of leadership and mentor them well in our presbyteries.

Trained leadership is both a key to our future and a safeguard against forces which would lead us astray as a Church.

7. The huge value of our Leadership Training Facility and its faculty in Dunedin.

Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership is a gem because it is ours and it allows us to make our own way in the world. It is our “license to drive”.

Hope finds its source in the present strength of God – in the knowledge of God’s omnipresence but that omnipresence finds expression in concrete ways in our life together. These are some of those concrete expressions.

Read the full version of this column on the Moderator’s blog <https://moderator.presbyterian.org.nz/>



## Looking ahead to GA18

**A proposal that considers end of life issues is one of several matters expected to attract discussion at this year's General Assembly in Christchurch.**

### Euthanasia

The End of Life Choice Bill, if passed into legislation, would give people with a terminal illness or an irremediable medical condition the option of requesting a physician-assisted death.

Submissions on the Bill closed in March, and the timetable for the Justice Select Committee's report on the Bill has been extended after a record 35,000 submissions were received. The Select Committee is expected to report to Parliament in March 2019, after considering oral submissions.

The Church's Doctrine Core Group has produced a comprehensive paper to help commissioners consider the important issues raised by the Bill. As well as considering medical and ethical arguments around physician-assisted death, the paper outlines principles in the Old and New Testament relevant to euthanasia.

While groups like the InterChurch Bioethics Council have published papers on euthanasia before, this is the first time that General Assembly has had the opportunity to consider recommendations and take a position on the matter.

### Advocating for increased use of Te Reo

Assembly will consider a proposal from Southern Presbytery aimed at promoting

and extending the use of Te Reo Maori within the Church, especially during worship.

The proposal affirms Te Reo Maori as one of the official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand and says that increased use of Maori language in worship reflects both the Church's bicultural commitment and our national identity.

### Caring for creation

Presbytery Central is shining a light on environmental issues with a proposal that asks Assembly to commit to reducing the Church's impact on the environment.

The proposal builds on the "We say Yes!" statement adopted at the 2016 General Assembly, and asks that "the Church express its mission of care for creation in achievable and manageable acts of waste reduction, recycling, conscious consumerism, and educational awareness".

The report includes a list of actions to be sent to parishes and church organisations for implementation.

### Update of significant church documents

The Book of Order Advisory Committee has revised the Conditions of Service Manual to take account of recent legislative changes, particularly in the area of employment law. The Council of Assembly issued the updated manual as a supplementary provision in February 2018 and General Assembly will be asked to ratify the new document.

The Committee also reports on its work to update the Code of Ethics and the Church's Child Safety Policy. The Code of Ethics has already been issued as a supplementary provision, and the new Child Safety Policy will be published as a supplementary provision as well, once work on the policy is complete.

A comprehensive review of Chapter 15 (discipline) of the Book of Order is underway, and it is the Committee's intention to bring this major work to the 2020 Assembly for consideration. However, Assembly will be asked to consider implementing some important changes immediately.

### Unity on the Korean peninsula

On behalf of the North Shore Korean Church, Northern Presbytery is asking Assembly to express its support for peace between North and South Korea.

The report advises that Koreans living in New Zealand are "very excited and delighted" to hear about the progress being made on bringing peace to the Korean peninsula.

Assembly is being asked to draft and adopt a prayer for peace that can be shared among New Zealand parishes, so that congregations may pray together as a body of Christ for peace between North and South Korea.

### Accra Confession

A proposal from Southern Presbytery asks Assembly to consider commending the Accra Confession to congregations.

Knox Presbyterian Church believes that the Accra Confession provides a



theological framework for holistically attending to today's economic and ecological injustices – inequality, child poverty, climate change and environmental degradation.

### Mission Enterprise Fund

Assembly will consider a proposal that addresses an identified anomaly in the exemption clauses for contribution to the Mission Enterprise Fund.

The proposal from Council of Assembly recommends amendment to the Mission Enterprise Fund exemption on sale proceeds to allow the replacement or improvement of either a manse and/or worship centre.

### Review of the Moderator's role

General Assembly 2016 asked for a detailed examination of the Moderator's role.

Comprehensive terms of reference were developed and the six-person Task Group considered the Moderator's role at Assembly and role in resourcing presbyteries. They also examined when the Moderator's term should begin, length of term (two or four years) and whether more than one term could be served. Other matters including stipend, expenses and support for the Moderator and the Moderatorial election process were also reviewed.

The Task Group consulted extensively including publication of discussion paper, to which 58 responses were received. Feedback came from presbyteries, parish councils, former Moderators, individuals and ad hoc groups.

The Task Group's report acknowledges the unique gifts each individual brings to the position: "In reviewing the role of the Moderator we are mindful of the many gifted people who have been called and elected to this position within our Church. Each in their own way has brought their leadership gifts and skills to this role".

### Making the Church's voice heard

The Social Voice Work Group – established by the 2016 General Assembly – is bringing a series of recommendations to support congregations to bring a Christian perspective to current social issues.

The Work Group is proposing the development of intentional networks – virtual and real – to resource congregations in the task of speaking out. It is envisaged that these cluster groups would share experience, resources and information. The proposal recognises that resources to inform prayerful deliberation and public comment are important, and includes reference to information that parishes can use to inform their social justice programme.

Presbyterian Women is also adding its voice to the call to engage more fully with social justice issues.

They are asking General Assembly to support and encourage presbyteries to institute an agile process to facilitate participation in civil democracy through submissions on public issues.

### Pacific Islands Synod

The Pacific Islands Synod is seeking changes to Book of Order membership

regulations to improve the ability of individuals to participate in the life of the Synod.

A task group set up by the Council of Assembly has examined current regulations and its report to Assembly recommends amendments to existing rules to better reflect the spirit of what General Assembly intended when it granted the Synod presbytery status in 2012.

The task group recommends explicitly recognising individual associate members so that those who are part of ethnic fellowships within multi-cultural congregations, may individually join the Synod as associate members – even if their parish has voted not to join the Synod. The individual would remain under the discipline of the Presbytery to which their congregation belongs.

These and other proposed changes will improve the pathways for individuals and fellowship groups to participate in the life of the Pacific Islands Synod.

General Assembly will also be asked to affirm a change of name for the Synod, which is seeking to be known as "Pacific Presbytery".

### Other reports

In addition to the matters outlined above, General Assembly will consider reports from Presbyterian Support, InterChurch Hospital Chaplaincy, InterChurch Bioethics Council and other organisations important to the life and mission of the Church.

Jose Reader Spanz



## Three Keynote Speakers for GA18

**Three of the Church's leaders will share their insight and wisdom as keynote speakers at this year's General Assembly.**

Moderator elect Rev Fakaofu Kaio has invited Very Rev Margaret Schrader, Very Rev Dr Graham Redding and Rev Ned Ripley to each speak for 30 minutes on an aspect of relationship with God.

Fakaofu says all three speakers are esteemed elders with a long relationship of service to our Church.

"They know our Church well and know from their experience and wisdom what our Church needs to hear."

### **Very Rev Margaret Schrader**

In 1995, Very Rev Margaret Schrader became one of only four women to be have been elected Moderator of our Church.

She trained as a Methodist deaconess at the Methodist Deaconess College, Melbourne, and later served our Church in a variety of capacities, including the Parish Development and Mission department; as Mission Resource Team spiritual growth consultant; and in shared ministry with her husband, the late Rev Warren Schrader.

After Warren's death, Margaret, with the help of two Catholic nuns, opened her home as The Still Point, a house of prayer.

She retired in 2004 and remains involved with her local church and spiritual direction. She is mother to seven children from Warren's previous marriages and one child with Warren.

Margaret is delighted to be invited to speak at Assembly. She will prepare an outline for her address on relationship with God, but is also open to "hearing the Spirit" and responding.

"I will talk about the way we know God, ask people to be in touch with their own felt sense of this and perhaps put a name to it. We will explore some of the many different images of God in Scripture - father, mother, friend, lover, holy one, midwife and more."

"I have been thinking about how who God is for me effects the decisions I make, how I make them and how I respond to others who have a very different sense or understanding. I am thinking about how as an Assembly we can listen to, and learn from, those with a different sense and then lovingly make decisions as the one people of God."

### **Very Rev Dr Graham Redding**

Very Rev Dr Graham Redding has been the Master of Knox College, Dunedin, since 2015. He is a former Moderator of our Church (2008-2010), was Principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Dunedin (2007-2014), and is a former parish minister.

Graham has served the Church in a variety of capacities, including the Leadership Policy Group and the Doctrine Core Group. He has a Doctorate through London University and is the author of *Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition*, published in 2003.

His relationship with Fakaofu extends back to his days in parish ministry in Auckland where, Graham says, Fakaofu was a "valued ministry colleague in the Presbytery. I valued his enthusiasm for the Gospel and his wise leadership".



Very Rev Margaret Schrader

Very Rev Dr Graham Redding

Reflecting on his relationship with the Presbyterian Church, Graham says, "With each passing year I think I identify more readily with the complexities and contradictions of the early Church, as recorded in the New Testament. The complexities keep it real. Like Jacob wrestling an unknown assailant who turns out to be God. For a Church that is struggling on so many levels, the image of faith being forged in the midst of struggle and giving rise to a new future is quite evocative".

For his Assembly keynote address, the aspect of relationship that Graham will focus on is worship.

"I've chosen to reflect on the nature of relationships that are grounded in, and nurtured by, the act of worship. I will draw on Isaiah 6:1-8, which describes a vision of worship".

### **Rev Ned Ripley**

Rev Ned Eric Ripley was born and raised in American Samoa. When he was 23, he entered the Theological College of the Congregational Union of New Zealand in Auckland.

He was ordained in the Congregational Union in 1966, and then called to the newly established Otara Pacific Islanders Church, Auckland, where he served in ministry for 15 years.


In 1980 he became a Justice of the Peace and an elder among Pasifika communities. The same year he was appointed Dean of Maori and Polynesian Studies at Knox Theological Hall, Dunedin.

Ned was awarded the Queen Service's medal (QSM) in 1982 for his contribution to Pacific communities.

He retired from the Church in 1990 and relocated with his wife Alice to American Samoa, where they served in parish ministry for 21 years. Alice died in 2017.

[Ned was unavailable for interview - Ed.]

Angela Singer [Spanz](#)



Rev Jin Sook Kim of the Waikouaiti Karitane Presbyterian Church (standing at left), and Rev Eric Oh of the Korean Presbyterian Church of Christchurch (standing at back) united members of their parish to bring a special winter holiday programme to the children of a rural community.

## Korean church helps rural church

**Deep in Otago's rural heartland is not where you would expect to see primary school children enjoying a holiday programme led by members of a Korean youth ministry.**

But that's exactly what unfolded in a small rural area just north of Dunedin. It is there that the Waikouaiti Karitane Presbyterian Church joined hands with the Korean Presbyterian Church of Christchurch to run a winter holiday programme for local children.

The collaboration was sparked when Rev Jin Sook Kim, minister of Waikouaiti Karitane Presbyterian Church, was trying to find a way to revive the popular winter holiday programme. It had been held regularly until last year, but an ageing congregation and fewer available hands meant it was a probable "no-go" again this year.

However, through both cultural and church connections, Jin Sook found a way to bring the holiday programme back, this time with the bonus of providing the five to 12-year-olds with an opportunity to interact with young adults of a different culture.

Jin Sook is Korean, as is Rev Eric Oh, assistant pastor and former youth worker at the Korean Presbyterian Church of Christchurch. While on a late 2017 visit to Dunedin, Eric heard about Jin Sook and they met up to discuss ways in which

Eric's church might be able to lend a hand – should she need it.

"At the time, I was thinking about the ways our church could participate in a local or domestic mission," he explains. "I was then in charge of a youth group ministry with about 50 students and 12 teachers, as well as an English ministry of 20 who all teach in various ministries at our church. I told Rev Kim of the blessings I had of many able and trained students in my ministry who would be more than ready to come and serve at whatever disposal she needed."

A grateful Jin Sook couldn't think of anything requiring immediate assistance, but within months was back in touch with Eric when it became apparent help would be needed if her church was to host the holiday programme this winter.

"We have been running the winter holiday programmes for the community children for many years – they have been very successful so far. But we couldn't do it because of lack of manpower. Members of our parish are ageing and we have a lack of resources," she says.

Her parish council pledged its unanimous support.

Eric and his team were delighted with the request. Jin Sook oversaw advertising for the programme through the community newspaper, had flyers distributed to the principals of three schools, and

helped arrange both lodgings for the Korean youth leader team and tea time refreshments for everyone involved.

Given that the programme attendees were mostly pakeha, and many had little churchgoing experience, the task could have presented some challenges, but this didn't end up being the case.

The Korean students were already familiar with a pakeha environment through their schools, so they struck an easy rapport with the children. The youngsters themselves responded brilliantly to three days of singing and dancing, worship, Bible story-telling, games and crafts.

"Although we were told that the children were not typical Sunday School kids, we still wanted to instil in them biblical values and the Gospel," Eric says. "The kids loved the programme... it was as if the students and the children had known each other a long time."

Jin Sook says the collaboration gave the parish two things. One was a renewed vision for the future of the church in Waikouaiti and Karitane, and the other was a realisation of the importance of "inland" mission, and the reason for it.

"If local churches are not sustainable, we will not be able to support overseas missions either."

For Eric, the collaboration provided an opportunity to practice what they had learned from Scripture.

"Our church was looking for a church to serve and the connection with Rev Kim was the spark that made it happen."

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



Rev Alistair McNaughton (centre back, with glasses) with some of the displaced people his Kaikoura church sheltered before they were evacuated.

# MINISTERING IN A | DISASTER ZONE

**Times of crisis often test faith in extraordinary ways, but they are also events through which faith can shine at its brightest. This was the case during the 2016 Kaikoura earthquakes, and the 2017 Edgecumbe floods. Two Presbyterian ministers found both events transformative.**

Rev Alistair McNaughton was minister at St Paul's Presbyterian Church in Kaikoura when the 7.8 magnitude earthquake ripped through much of New Zealand's upper South Island on 14 November 2016.

He was asleep when the quake struck just after midnight. Its complex sequence of ruptures lasted around two minutes, causing two deaths and generating over \$900 in business insurance claims. His wife Catherine was on the phone, he recalls. After the initial shock, Alistair's three years' experience as a territorial in the NZ defence force kicked into action and he applied every ounce of that training alongside his faith to help those in need.

Less than five months later, Rev Chris Barnard of the Whakatane Presbyterian Church felt his own stilling of the blood when in the early morning of 6 April, 2017, rising waters spawned by the remnants of Cyclone Debbie overwhelmed the settlement of Edgecumbe. As the waters threatened to engulf Chris's home with barely any warning, he too found an untested resilience that saw him move methodically to help with the evacuation and resettlement of displaced locals.

Being that closely involved in a natural disaster was a first for both men. When speaking of it now, each reflects on how his faith made it clear what needed to be done and provided the strength to do it.

Alistair left St Paul's last year, to lead St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Geraldine, shortly before the community marked the quake's anniversary. A special service affirmed his belief that the earthquake had strengthened, rather than weakened, the community; he spoke then about an "increased connection and openness with people", one that had brought everyone closer together.

He is proud, too, of the level of "stuff" done by the St Paul's community during the crisis, "particularly given its small size".

After the quake struck, directly after ensuring his own family's safety, Alistair began checking on others.

"I started doing the rounds of our parishioners ... checking particularly on the aged people in the congregation. Everyone was terribly shaken; they were in the streets ... very fearful as the aftershocks just kept coming."

St Paul's location close to the hospital and the emergency operations centre meant power and water were quickly restored, making it a workable venue for displaced people. The church itself had come through relatively unscathed, but the historic Sanford pipe organ was damaged.

Both St Paul's and Takahanga Marae provided shelter. In constant communication with civil defence teams, Alistair helped shepherd an increasing number of displaced people to a safe environment. Mattresses and pew cushions became beds, and a way was found to provide breakfast - even on that first day.

"I think over the course of that week, over 100 people came into the church or the marae. That first 24 hours were chaotically busy, evacuations started within a day or so."

Local churches came together in a show of unity, offering practical support in the form of food, clothing and other items, and spiritual support through their members talking and praying with affected locals. Alistair emcee'd a combined service held in the park on the Sunday after the quake, one that involved all the churches and the army chaplain.

Appeals were started around the country by a raft of organisations, churches and other faith groups. The Presbyterian Church launched a Moderator's appeal, with donated funds going to the Alpine Presbytery for distribution among the affected churches and communities. General Assembly 2016 gave \$8000 to get things started.

As time passed, different needs arose. Being cut off meant tough economic times for the region and it was clear ongoing help would be required, both practical and emotional as many people suffered from post-traumatic stress symptoms. The church continued to provide both.



Evacuees are on a truck on its way out of Edgecumbe.

"We have learned so much from the experience. On a personal level, I have learned that you must get involved, you have to be prepared to make decisions that ordinarily you would make only after consultation with the elders," says Alistair. "I'm very fortunate that the quake didn't traumatise me – but I have made adjustments to my life I will carry with me for a very long time."

Chris Barnard's first brush with a natural disaster in April 2017 had many of the same elements experienced by Alistair.

Chris was at home in the early morning when the Rangitiki River breached a stop bank, causing widespread flooding across Edgecumbe. The Whakatane Presbyterian Church minister was as shocked as everyone else as the water swept in. "Everyone was evacuated very quickly ... many still in their pyjamas. They had to leave everything behind, clothes, papers, passports, some had to leave pets they couldn't immediately find. People were gathering in emergency centres.

"We set up tables in the one closest to us," he recalls. "We were lucky in that my intern, Kylie Provan, is trained in fire/rescue, so we were immediately able to climb on the bandwagon with the emergency teams."

Members of the congregation worked a roster system to man the emergency centre, providing support and sustenance to residents of around 200 evacuated homes. Unaffected families went through their homes and donated whatever they could spare – clothes, blankets, furniture and food.

"It was amazing to see how people just came together ... quite overwhelming."

Kaimai Presbyterian was one of the first to get an appeal going locally, then the Church's Moderator Rt Rev Richard Dawson called for support for the Whakatane Presbyterian Church's Have a Heart Charitable Trust appeal. Together with other appeals launched, the goods started pouring in and homes were found for most of it.

The Presbyterian appeal raised over \$34,000 to help Edgecumbe residents, over and above the massive amount of food and clothing donated by congregations elsewhere. Once the water subsided, church members also helped with the clean up and restoration, applying whatever skills they could muster.

"There was a lot of pain and trauma in the community ... even now, when it starts raining hard, some of the children

start crying. Schools were closed initially, of course, and then there was the immediate recovery phase," Chris says. "About 1200 volunteers were going from street to street helping people; the council was removing 900 tonnes of dumped waste from the streets every week for about eight weeks. By June, 60 percent of those displaced had not yet returned to their homes."

Whakatane Presbyterian has four congregations – Knox, Ohope, Waimana and Edgecumbe. Chris says one of the things they did as a team once Edgecumbe Primary reopened was to enlist additional volunteers and provide meals for over 200 children and 20 staff every Tuesday and Thursday evening for around eight weeks.

The St David's Presbyterian Church op-shop in Edgecumbe was totally washed out. Some of the Presbyterian funding were used to bring it back on stream – even now, some of its wares are being distributed free to those needing it.

More of the funding went towards paying for two people affected by the floods to do a two-year agricultural course at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. "They will then come back into the community and establish a community garden – it will benefit everyone in the long-term."

A similar arrangement in Taneatua will see four students have their studies supported to enable them to restore a community garden destroyed in the floods. "Because of the devastation elsewhere, Taneatua was largely overlooked. This was one way we could help."

The physical restoration following the floods is still ongoing, Chris says, as is the emotional healing. Over 100 people attended a Healing Service and Going Forward community event organised by Kylie on the anniversary of the floods.

Much has been learned from the disaster, he says, both from a community standpoint and a personal one. Even as people start moving back into their homes, they carry some of that initial trauma with them.

"People in the church and the community are much more connected now, they watch out for each other more. There are other practical elements we know we need to have on board should anything like this ever happen again."

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



# ***Pasifika women raise breast cancer awareness***

The Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church of Newtown, Wellington, held a pink ribbon high tea to encourage discussion about breast cancer and raise funds for research

**A high tea gave the Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church of Newtown an ideal launch event for its new health and well-being committee.**

May was breast cancer awareness month. One of the key ways the Breast Cancer Foundation NZ fundraises for its vision of no deaths from breast cancer is to invite people to host a pink ribbon breakfast or high tea.

Committee convenor Alisa Belford says a high tea was novel for the church.

"We thought it would be a welcoming way to start getting our message out," she says. "Quite a few people didn't know what a high tea is. It was something they could be curious about and not know what to expect."

The women of the parish outdid themselves with catering, decorating, serving and hosting the Saturday mid-morning event, laid out on vibrantly decorated tables and the signature three-tier plates.

"Like many churches, we're blessed to have many talents and gifts," Alisa remarks. "It was beautifully set up and made everyone who came feel special."

After an opening prayer by Rev Elama Maea, the MC Magele Collins introduced the event and tea was served. During this, a short video called Women of the Pacific Fight Breast Cancer with Love, Faith and Hope was screened.

The video's message about the importance of screening and early detection was also timely. New research from Waikato University shows Pasifika women in

New Zealand have more aggressive forms of the disease and are twice as likely to die from breast cancer than their Palagi sisters. The biggest factor in poor outcomes is late diagnosis.

Guest speaker Kimi Higginson talked about her struggles to have her health concerns heard by the medical profession.

"They told me at first I had a flu. I had to insist on an x-ray," she says, "and my lymphoma was finally diagnosed."

Talking openly about my journey of recovery into remission with church family and friends was a gift, says Kim.

"I tell you I was lost for words, overwhelmed by people appreciating what I shared. People do care, no matter what your ethnicity. You can see it written on their faces. And although I was very focused on getting better, I couldn't have done it alone, without my family's support and heaps of prayers."

Around 45 people of all different ages attended, which Alisa says is important because the disease is developing earlier in Pasifika women. Around half are being diagnosed while younger than 45 years, yet eligibility for free screening only begins at that age.

Among the supporters was a table of husbands and fathers.

"It was a conversation starter for our men," Alisa reflects, "and helped to bring down the barriers to discussing breast cancer. Hearing Kimi speak prompted Tapu Belford, session clerk for the parish, to share the pain he experienced watching his wife who he loved suffer and pass away from breast cancer."

Cancer is no longer the dreaded C word, she says, but neither is it an everyday conversation.

"I personally don't think Pacific communities are silent about cancer anymore but it's still not talked about in daily life, and when you meet someone you can relate to, it's easier to share. One of our committee members was prompted to talk to her daughter about screening."

She says the collective nature of Pasifika communities means primary health care is more effective from a group approach.

"Our women need support from each other. We prefer to do things together. For example, Breast Cancer Pacific Health came to us and made a schedule for screening and we all went down to the van together."

The high tea raised \$800 for the Breast Cancer Foundation. In 2017, more than 3,600 Kiwis hosted a pink ribbon breakfast and collectively raised over \$1.8 million for research and support. Programmes include Victoria University's development of a therapeutic vaccine which aims to destroy breast cancer by boosting the immune system; and an online community app called mybc where patients and supporters can connect and share.

To sign up for the screening programme (free for women aged 45-69), call 0800 270 200 or go online at [www.timetoscreen.nz](http://www.timetoscreen.nz), and to find out more about the support available for Pasifika women undergoing cancer treatment, go to [www.breastcancer.org.nz/Support/Maori-and-pasifika/support](http://www.breastcancer.org.nz/Support/Maori-and-pasifika/support).

Jade Reidy Spanz



# Presbyterian heads Government Inquiry into Mental Health

In June, Hastings' St John's College students hosted a forum for the Government's Inquiry into Mental Health and Addictions. Professor Ron Paterson chaired the forum.

**The Government Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry established in January 2018 is chaired by Ron Paterson, a member of the Clevedon/Kawakawa Bay Church and community.**

Ron grew up in Clevedon and Papakura, and returned to the area over 20 years ago.

He studied law at Auckland and Oxford, taught in Canada and returned as a law lecturer at Auckland University, starting a course in law and medicine. He spent a decade as New Zealand's Health and Disability Commissioner, handling complaints about healthcare and disability services. Recently, while still a part-time Professor of Law at Auckland University, Ron has taken on national review jobs – looking at how veterans are supported in New Zealand and reviewing aged care quality regulation in Australia.

The mental health and addiction inquiry is a much bigger review. It has a wide scope, including to recommend specific changes to improve New Zealand's approach to mental health and create an integrated approach to promoting mental well-being.

When asked to head the inquiry, Ron went to see the Rev Martin Baker, minister of Clevedon Presbyterian Church: "I felt it was a heavy responsibility and that I was being asked to step up. Martin listened and encouraged me, saying 'This is your vocation. This is your calling.'"

Over the past three months, the inquiry panel has travelled from Kaitaia to Invercargill for 26 public meetings.

Panel members heard "the voices of the community" in 300 meetings with a broad range of individuals and organisations around New Zealand.

Spirituality has been a noticeable element in the inquiry's forums, says Ron. "The importance of spirituality as a part of mental health and well-being has emerged as a theme in our meetings all around the country in different settings – on marae, in community centres and churches."

Churches have a role to play, says Ron. "I was keen to have one of our 'meet the panel' forums in my own church community because one of the themes we've been hearing is that many of the potential solutions to mental distress lie in our own communities. Churches are part of that because, like marae, they can be a community hub, and that's happening in Clevedon."

"Many people have talked about how taking a purely medical approach, with medication, has not been enough for their recovery and that hope and spirituality have also been important. We've heard that clearly from people who have overcome addictions and from people facing mental health challenges."

Another strong theme has been the need for prevention and early intervention, as well as access to appropriate care and support.

Ron chaired the July community forum hosted by Clevedon Presbyterian Church for the Government Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry.

Reflecting on the evening, Rev Martin Baker describes it as "both humbling and troubling".

"I found it pretty overwhelming, hearing the depth and breadth of people's experiences, those who had undergone mental health challenges and family members who supported them. It was an outflow of concern and anguish and suffering," he says.

"One ex-heroin addict talked about problems with services; a family talked about multiple suicide attempts by one of their children; and another talked about a teenager incarcerated by a court order so that they had limited contact."

"I think there was a strong sense of the community coming together and hearing other people's stories. Having had experience of alcohol and drug problems in my own family, hearing other people talk about their experiences, I found quite helpful."

For Ron, the Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry is another opportunity in his career to draw together his professional skills and personal interests. "As a teenager I was always interested in moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia. I studied law, but was pulled towards medicine. I was never attracted to a traditional legal career. It's a great privilege to do work that can make a difference in people's lives – and the recommendations of the inquiry will aim to do that."

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

# HELPING OUT THOSE IN DEBT

Maureen Little, Presbyterian Support Northern Family Works Budgeting and Money Management service manager, has helped 10,000 people with budgeting support and advice over a 30 year period.

## Christian-based debt counselling is helping to release Kiwis from a life sentence of poverty.

Debt levels in New Zealand are at an all-time high, at 168 percent of annual disposable income, compared to 95 percent in 1998. Collectively, we are borrowing and living beyond our means. Work and Income handed out 50,000 more hardship assistance grants in the three months to June this year and says demand for food assistance has been the biggest contributor to that rise.

Churches can often be the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, providing food and shelter to those in need, but increasingly they are taking a more proactive, resilience-based approach, facilitating pathways out of chronic debt and poverty.

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is a national organisation that since 2007 has partnered with around 65 New Zealand churches of many denominations to provide holistic debt help. "Free services with love" is how they promote the church partnership, and CAP says that 91 percent of clients avoid unmanageable debt after leaving their service debt-free. Over 1,000 New Zealanders who access its services have come to faith.

Presbyterian churches partnering with CAP include Hope Presbyterian Church in Christchurch. Two years ago, Hope began a partnership – WestHope Centre – with another local parish, Westchurch. Hope initially provided two employees and although Westchurch has now taken over the running of the centre, Hope still provides payroll support and can't speak highly enough of CAP.

"They're supportive and professional and I highly recommend them as a starting place for other churches wanting to offer this kind of outreach," says Hope minister Rev Hamish Galloway. "It's not just the budget advice, it's the relationships that enable people to follow through. They're invitational."

The newest partnership is in Whakatane: a Debt Centre funded by the Whakatane Presbyterian Church's Have a Heart Charitable Trust, which is in turn supported by charitable grants and donations.

Whakatane Debt Centre coach and manager Pauline Cottrell says the service was needed as an option for those with unmanageable debt, alongside the budget advisory service already offered in the area. Pauline trained with CAP to "undertake the upfront visiting to explain the process and present the individualised budget".

"We befriend and get alongside people, and then we send the paperwork to CAP, who do the budget, which we take back to the client," Pauline says. "The client has the option to opt out at any time or to work with CAP. CAP supports the client until they become debt free".

From the front line, Pauline sees the hidden face of debt and understands the reasons why people are reluctant to ask for help. "They feel isolated by circumstances and ashamed. There's a loss of pride, and the worse it gets the wider the damage spreads. Some have even considered suicide because of feeling without hope."

Online TV shopping can be a contributor to unsustainable spending, she says, as can the clothing trucks that trawl low-income areas selling clothes and other staples at vastly marked-up prices. The ready availability of instant finance at high interest rates also traps people in poverty.

"Life circumstances, like redundancy or illness, can head people down the track of unmanageable debt. This is can affect people from any socio-economic group."

The pathway to becoming debt-free is aided by a commitment to the process, "being able to live within your means". Debt centre clients agree to put a set amount into a CAP account from which payments for debts are distributed. CAP also negotiates on behalf of clients to have manageable repayment plans that

prioritise rent, food and power so that clients are able to pay off debts, feed their families and keep a roof over their heads without being hassled by creditors.

Some Presbyterian churches, such as St Peters in the City in Tauranga, offer a CAP Money programme as well as running or supporting a debt centre. The programme provides free financial literacy training.

Minister Rev Simon McLeay agrees with Pauline Cottrell that the CAP scheme works if you work it.

"The challenge with CAP is commitment," he says. "They also operate firm boundaries and won't take on anyone with under-the-table income or any kind of fraud. And they don't work with self-employed people who don't have a guaranteed weekly income."

The service has been running for seven years, with a part-time paid manager and trained volunteers. Simon says its value is in being a bridge to the community and wrapping care around people.

Further north, in east Auckland, St Columba at Botany has been running a free budgeting service since 2007. The area is well served with budgeting services, so the church offering is low level and its part-time counsellor only saw 12 clients in the past year, says Manager Bruce Dixon.

Other churches are finding ways to partner with and support debt counselling services. St John's in Wellington found that CAP programmes were already running in their neighbourhood. Rather than start a competing service, the church decided to support The Street Church with its debt counselling and money management offerings.

A woman who knows all too well the struggles of those in debt is Maureen Little, Presbyterian Support Northern Family Works Budgeting and Money Management service manager. She has been offering budgeting support and advice for 30 years, and is often invited to give budget presentations to churches. Based in Auckland, she is "Aunty" Maureen to many of her clients.



Auckland-based mother of four Clestina completed a CAP Debt Help programme and became debt-free in 2016. She describes CAP as her pathway out of a dark place.

“We befriend and get alongside people, and then we send the paperwork to CAP, who do the budget, which we take back to the client”

Pauline Cottrell

The 73-year-old has seen people on low incomes become trapped in more complicated forms of debt, with the proliferation of online shopping and what's known as “third-tier lenders”. These comprise consumer finance companies such as Harmony Money, pawnbrokers and mobile trucks.

Maureen says credit is still relatively easy to obtain, even for those who clearly cannot afford repayments.

“The law at present says lenders have to make reasonable enquiries to be satisfied the borrower can afford the loan without suffering substantial hardship,” she explains, “but we need clearer definitions of what affordable means and what ‘reasonable enquiries’ means.”

An Auckland City Mission Family 100 Project conducted a year-long study of 100 householders, which showed credit became an addiction born of necessity, and finance companies were viewed as “saviours” because they take on debt nobody else will, but often at exorbitant rates.

In 2017, the Commerce Commission surveyed 217 lenders. While 45 lenders had rates above 20 percent, 17 had interest

rates of more than 100 percent a year, and a further five were advertised at over 500 percent.

The City Mission study highlighted that money stress and anxiety are all-consuming and prevent people being able to plan. Women also often take on debts for abusive partners or family members who don't repay them. Although the study's participants spoke of chronic lack of income, resources and opportunity, the study also painted a picture of creativity and resilience.

Maureen agrees. “I always look for the good in every client and want them to achieve financial independence,” she says. “It's heartening to see young couples and university students come in who are planning ahead and want help to prepare a budget before they get into trouble.”

Because debt is often inter-generational, Maureen says parents and schools have a responsibility. “Parents owe it to their kids to be good role models around money, and money management should be taught in schools.”

A review of the consumer credit laws is underway. In their sights are mobile shopping trucks, limiting interest rates,

addressing illegal lending behaviour and making more rules about debt collection to reduce unrealistic demands and harassment. Submissions closed on 1 August and the bill is expected to reach Parliament by the end of the year.

Affordable credit is frequently cited as making the biggest systemic difference to lifting people out of poverty and debt. For those who can demonstrate their ability to repay a loan, two recent schemes are responding to this need. Nga Tangata Microfinance Trust is a partnership with the Child Poverty Action Group - the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services is also a founding member. Capital is provided by Kiwibank. See [ngatangatamicrofinance.org.nz](http://ngatangatamicrofinance.org.nz) and [nzccss.org.nz/work/poverty/debt-loan-sharks](http://nzccss.org.nz/work/poverty/debt-loan-sharks) for more information.

The second source of equitable loans is the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS), which loans up to \$1,000 for essential goods and services such as beds, furniture and fridges, and step-up loans of up to \$5,000. The microfinance scheme supports women and is governed by the Good Shepherd NZ. See [nils.org.nz](http://nils.org.nz) for details.

Jade Reidy Spanz

## Earthquake Prone Buildings Policy

Revised May 2018

**At the 2016 General Assembly, the Church Property Trustees indicated that they would review the timelines in the then current Earthquake Prone Buildings Policy, in light of the feedback from presbyteries and congregations about the difficulty in meeting the original timetable.**

It took longer to reissue the policy than was intended, as the Trustees were mindful of proposed changes in Government policy following the Waiatu-Kaikoura earthquake.

### The key points of the Church's policy are:

The timetable for obtaining Initial and/or Detailed Seismic Assessments **has not** been changed. It is crucial for presbyteries and congregations to know and understand the state of their buildings and what risks they might pose to safety and long-term use.

The timetable for taking remedial action, especially for low risk regions and buildings, **has been lengthened**. Pre-1935 timber buildings have been proven to be more resilient than expected, so the remediation timeframes on these, and buildings in low risk areas, have been significantly extended.

The Government and local authorities have recognised the danger posed by **parapets and facades** that could topple onto public spaces and now require these structures to be urgently addressed. It is appropriate that the Church also does this as a top priority.

Strengthening to 67% NBS is strongly recommended by the New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineers. It also continues to be the Trustees' expectation in order to both preserve life and to ensure the ongoing usability of our church buildings. As requested by the 2014 General Assembly, the Trustees may

permit congregations to upgrade to a lower level when the cost of going to 67% is excessive, or when the facility is not one that is critical for the functioning of the congregation and/or has very low levels of use.

The revised policy can be downloaded from the Trustees' section of the Church's website at:

**Church Property Trustees / Property / Earthquake Prone Buildings Policy**

**Enquiries for the Trustees can be made to:**

**The Executive Officer, Kos van Lier**

**P (04) 381 8296 or E [kos@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:kos@presbyterian.org.nz)**

# PASIFIKA FAITH & FELLOWSHIP

**Sixty-one members of Onehunga Co-operating Parish, Auckland, spent the first fortnight in July on a fellowship mission to the idyllic Tahitian island group of Bora Bora.**

The fellowship was grounded in an exchange of faith with likeminded groups in Tahiti. Planned by one of the parish's women's fellowships, the visit to Cook Island Group's Vainetini Tere took in four island areas between 6 and 13 July – Tahiti Nui, Moorea, Bora Bora and Raiatea.

Onehunga Co-operating Parish minister Rev Fakaofu Kaio – who is the Presbyterian Church's Moderator elect – described the mission as “both educational and spiritually profound”.

“The fellowship – or tere – encompassed worship, singing, Bible reflections, food, storytelling, and the sharing of cultural and historical treasures. It was holistic and soul-replenishing.”

The Onehunga parish group was made up of 31 women, plus 30 men and children. While the four islands hosted the group, opportunities arose for them to reach beyond established faith communities and share time with the wider public.

“The responses were out of this world for the Women's Fellowships, host groups and the wider public,” Fakaofu says. “There was an incredible emotional high with warmth, an overflowing of God's goodness and love.”



The Rev Fakaofu Kaio and his wife Ruth, left, with members of the Onehunga Co-operating Parish women's fellowship group after a church service they attended in Fa'a during their recent mission to Bora Bora.

The parish's Cook Island Women's Vainetini president, Teremoana Daniels, arranged the mission itinerary. She has established linkages with Tahiti; her parents were former ministers in one of Tahiti's outer islands, and Teremoana is fluent in French, Tahitian, Cook Island Maori and English.

One of the mission leaders, Pikura Purotu, says even with the challenges of squiring such a large group around, the trip went smoothly. “We had people of all ages, from babies to someone in his 80s, and I couldn't fault a thing.”

She particularly enjoyed following the history of the islands and was delighted at the symbolism of a small gnarled tree said to be over 200 years old, growing out of a rock in Bora Bora where the first Christians made landfall.

Pikura also composed Christian songs to take on the mission, one of which Teremoana translated into Tahitian before it was performed to the locals.

Another of their number, Mereani Vaetoru, described the trip as “amazing” and said everyone enjoyed it. She was particularly honoured to have been part of a church service on the last Sunday of the trip, one which they conducted in the Tahitian language.

“I felt so privileged to praise God in a foreign language,” she says.

While the visit to Tahiti was a first for Fakaofu, he has represented the wider Presbyterian Church at many ecumenical assemblies and consultations held in different parts of the world. His Samoan parents were missionaries with the

London Missionary Society in Tokelau, and he was named Fakaofu after the Tokelau island where he was born.

He was Moderator of the North Shore Presbytery in 2001 and first Moderator of the Northern Presbytery from 2011 to 2012; he was called to Onehunga in June 2005.

Established in 1996, Onehunga Parish united the local Church of Christ, Methodist and Presbyterian churches into one parish. Its members include Cook Islanders, Europeans, Samoans, Niueans, Tongans, Koreans, Indians, Fijians and Tokelauans.

Leaving most of the Tahitian mission work to the women in the group, Fakaofu says, “For my part, a highlight was the daily devotions in the mornings and evenings. Meeting the host communities meant there were always opportunities to share with reflection, encouragement, challenges and prayer.”

Fakaofu's wife Ruth was also on the mission.

“For my wife and I, it was an exceptional experience,” he says. “There were three highlights for us. One was visiting a place called Mahina in Tahiti. This is where the London Missionary Society first landed in 1797 on the ship, The Duff. Many people in the Pacific and Asia became Christians through this movement.

“Another was our visit to a marae called Taputapuata on the island of Raiatea. It is said to be a holy place in Polynesia, regarded as their place of origin. And overall, sharing the experience with some of our church family was a clear highlight.”

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



## CONNECT FOR YOUTH LEADERS AND MINISTERS

**This year, for the first time, Connect included a ministers' workstream.**

Among the youth workers from 55 churches who attended Connect in July at Waikanae were 15 ministers. All were there to bridge the gap between the contemporary world of youth leaders and the Word.

The idea for a ministers' stream came from Rev Ryhan Prasad. "I trained in ministry with other youth workers and we continue to kick around ideas in a virtual Common Room but there aren't many opportunities to meet face-to-face. I reached out and asked them what they wanted to get resourced on."

The feedback included Te Reo, preaching and Presbyterian identity.

"I was encouraged by watching them wrestle with challenges alongside youth workers," says conference organiser and Presbyterian Youth Ministry manager Gordon Fitch. "It was good to see those conversations taking place. Youth work often happens in a silo so it's easy for ministers to miss seeing the potential of our young people."

The vibrancy, depth and positivity were unmistakable for three first-time attendees. Rev Alistair McNaughton came from Geraldine. The small South Canterbury town has been revived with an influx of young families in recent years, and St Andrew's has a 40-strong youth group.

"As a minister I need to connect with all age groups," says Alistair. "I was highly impressed with the broad reach of

speakers and came away from Connect with useful research on Gen Z and how to effectively reach the intermediates. It was wonderful seeing the vibrant worship and being able to network with other ministers."

Rev Erin Pendreigh is the Mission Advisor for the Synod of Otago and Southland, where the polar opposite experience is occurring across the Synod's 70 parishes. Many have only one or two young people, and while the churches want to meet young people's needs their worlds are often outside the congregations' comfort zone, says Erin.

"We have a responsibility as leaders to form and shape young people but our perceptions of them is often not right and we've marginalised them as being a bit scary," she admits. "I went to Connect to learn about their hopes and dreams, where they're at, and was so impressed with the depth of their critical thinking, their desire to be relevant and integral to the Church, not on the side-lines."

Erin says she has returned with the confidence to challenge congregations not to marginalise their youth.

"We wouldn't dream of segregating our young mums, so why do we do that to our young people?" she questions. "It was great to see the national team in action at Connect and have a sense of where they're taking the Church. I would encourage those ministers especially who haven't come through the youth ministry stream to go and be part of it."

Rev Mark Maney was also new to Connect. His church, St Andrew's in

Mt Maunganui, doesn't have a youth group and Mark was keen to gain insights into youth culture and ideas for starting a youth ministry from the ground up.

"I wanted to know what their passions are, what resonates for them, and especially how to grow the tweenies into youth groups," he says. "The speakers were spot on. Of all the Church events I've been to Connect is up there. If you want to go somewhere to get equipped to be a youth leader, it's the ideal place, and even if you used to be a youth worker, things have changed in the past 10 years. Go again. More information is better than less."

Rev Mo Morgan started Connect in 2002 and is now minister of St James Church in Whanganui. As a PYM alumnus, Connect felt like coming home.

"It was great being back," she admits. "I thought the multicultural flavour of worship was outstanding. It showed who we're becoming in our Church and was done in such a beautiful, authentic way."

Mo brought her leadership team with her. "It was great to come as a team, to grow and bond over the weekend. I would definitely go again."

"It was a real big success," agrees Ryhan. "The weekend strengthened our collegiality and our ability to bring the two ministries together more effectively. You also come away inspired with hope."

A more formal programme for the ministers' workstream is likely to be tailored for next year's Connect.

Jade Reidy Spanz



## Ko koutou nga uri o Te Tahu Ngahere

**Presbyterians are people of the burning bush. Ko koutou nga uri o Te Tahu Ngahere. Depictions of the burning bush appear on our websites, letterheads and church billboards.**

The burning bush offers us an identity as a Church, one located in the mysterious story of encounter between Moses and God. In Exodus 3:1-7 God is revealed as a God of love, who sees suffering, justice and issues a call to mission.

In June, as Principal of Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, I found myself upside down and on the other side of the world. I had been invited to speak to leaders in the Church of Scotland, a partner church of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, about the innovation in mission occurring at Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

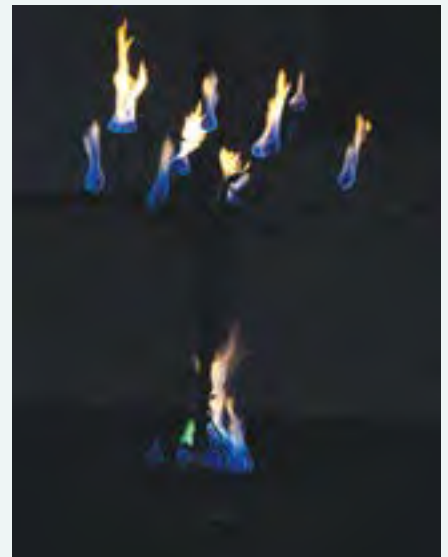
In introducing myself, I wanted to represent us as Presbyterians in New Zealand in our cultural diversity. I began each of my five talks with a greeting in Maori and named the covenant relationship with Te Aka Puaho, the Maori Synod. I explained to the Church of Scotland that in English, Te Aka Puaho means the burning vine and the story

of Exodus 3 is being read in creative conversation with John 15:1 "I am the true vine." The result is that in name and symbol, tangata whenua have engaged Scripture and Presbyterianism in fresh ways.

Next, I showed a picture of a stained glass window from St Johns Presbyterian, Papatoetoe, with words of explanation by their minister the Rev Margaret Anne Low: "The new [burning] bush in our window... has flowers of the frangipani blossoming from it, representing later settlers from the Pacific Islands. It is in the blues and whites of the ocean waters which surround New Zealand... The flames are the white caps on the waves, blown by the wind and doves are the seabirds flying overhead. God's spirit in the Pacific." (Newsletter Jan 2011).

This picture allowed me to affirm the gift of Pacific migration and their impact on us as Presbyterians. As with Te Aka Puaho, it provided an object lesson in matters of theology, an example of how culture enlivens faith and helps us see Scripture and migration in fresh ways.

Finally, I showed photos from a recent alternative worship service. In preparation for worship, organisers had soaked pumice in methylated spirits and welded together a burning bush out of metal. Pumice absorbs methylated spirits and placed strategically on the metal bush, and lit, it burns with a beautiful deep blue light. It provided a moving way to engage the story of Exodus and reflect on what it means for us today to hear a call to mission in response to a God of love, who sees the suffering in our communities.



Craig Mitchell

At an alternative worship service, a burning bush made from metal with methylated spirits soaked pumice burnt with deep blue flames.

As Presbyterians, we use the burning bush to locate our identity looking back. Yet when we consider how diverse cultures have interpreted the burning bush in symbol, stained glass and creative worship, we are invited to not only look back, but also forward.

Globally and locally, we are in a time of immense cultural change. We need to encourage our young people and all cultures to engage creatively with their context. The stories of Te Aka Puaho and St Johns Presbyterian show us what it means to read Scripture and be Presbyterian: Ko koutou nga uri o Te Tahu Ngahere, people of the burning bush.

– Rev Dr Steve Taylor is the principal of Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

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If you feel that God might be calling you to such a position and would like further information please contact:

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The Invercargill Future Church Initiative team, appointed by the Equip South Resource Group: from left, Debra Clark, Rev Peter Dunn, Norman Maclean and Rev Tony Dawson.

# Invercargill churches chart a new path

**Facing challenges linked to declining congregations and limited resources, Invercargill Presbyterians are capitalising on their status as the biggest single Christian group in the city and are charting a new path forward.**

In an alliance involving each of the city's eight Presbyterian parishes and an adjacent rural parish, they have launched the "Future Church Initiative". Described as a working model for collaborative ministry and mission in Invercargill, it is intended to secure the Church's long-term future.

Even in its formative stages, the initiative is signalling hope. Windsor Community Church pastor and one of those behind the drive, Rev Peter Dunn, says there is some "gestating" going on and predicts productive months ahead.

"Already some interesting ideas are bubbling up; they may or may not include parishes reconfiguring, going from a metaphorical to a real green-field approach. We may use our present land assets for community-facing

mission while consolidating where we worship together."

Behind the move are numerous challenges Peter says warranted urgent action. The starting point was comments from two part-time ordained ministers, concerned that they wouldn't be replaced if they left their current positions.

Individually, parishes are struggling under the burden of compliance and related costs explains Peter.

"For some, life expectancy is short. Parishes are struggling to maintain old buildings, and many have earthquake compliance issues. In the past two years, two church buildings have been demolished due to structural issues; both congregations now worship in their respective halls."

Declining membership linked to an ageing demographic is evident, with most parishes finding it difficult to motivate valuable and once readily-available volunteers.

"But the biggest issue is the lack of new Christians coming into the church," Peter says. "As an indicator, there were 12 adult baptisms across three parishes in 2017 in a city of almost 55,000 people."

Figures show that 41 percent of attendees in June attended one congregation, with 2 percent attending the smallest congregation. Between 2013 and 2017, two parishes showed increased attendance while the rest recorded a decline – yet together the Presbyterian Church of Invercargill represents the biggest single Christian group in the city.

Invercargill's location isn't an issue, either, Peter insists. The city has one of New Zealand's biggest event centres, and easily attracts national and international Christian speakers. "One of the parishes ran a youth conference in July with national and international speakers. It was sold out and had to turn people away."

Neither is the problem entirely new, he suggests. The possibility of bringing parishes together in a co-operative framework was first raised 30 years ago, but new impetus has come from current difficulties and the fact that of the eight city parishes, only two have full-time, paid ordained ministry.

"There are two parishes with part-time ordained ministers, one with a full-time LOM ministry intern, and the rest have ministry teams of lay people. Some of the teams are tired and not regenerating."

In response, Equipsouth – the former Southland Presbytery area that is now one of the regional groups of the Southern Presbytery – invited Rev Hamish Galloway from Christchurch's Hope Presbyterian to spend an evening with Invercargill parish representatives and discuss a way forward. A small workgroup was appointed, with Rotorua's Rev Lance Thomas as facilitator.

Lance started by meeting parish councils, then led an Equipsouth gathering in March, attended by over 80 elders and ministers from the parishes. It was agreed to work towards changing the way the Presbyterian Church operates in Invercargill, and with financial support from the Synod of Otago and Southland to cover Lance's costs, the "Future Church Initiative" was formed.

Each of the parishes involved has contributed two people to a project team aimed at representing the church as a "whole" and refining workable models for collaborative ministry: one older individual to "gift" the church to a new generation, and the younger to lead the church for the next 50 years.

"At the first gathering, it was amazing to see those in their 70s and 80s sitting with those in their 20s and 30s. Lance is back with us in August to facilitate the ideas being 'birthed'," Peter says.

"Where this will lead none of us knows... but they are listening for the leading of the Holy Spirit as the discussions begin."

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)

# YOUNG PRESBYTERIAN'S WORK MAKES WORLD-WIDE DIFFERENCE

**They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree and that's certainly the case for Jessie Boston, who worshiped at Wellington's St John's in the City Presbyterian Church for over a decade.**

The 26-year-old currently works for Tearfund in London, an evangelical international aid and development agency that "follows Jesus where the need is greatest", says Jessie, the daughter of Professor Jonathan Boston (Professor of Public Policy at Victoria University) and Mary Hutchinson, a GP-turned-photographer who spent much of her medical career working with refugee patients.

"My parents chose careers that put others first, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. Their focus has been on inequality, child poverty and climate change, as well as speaking out for those who don't have a voice, which has definitely influenced me to do the same."

While she's always had a strong streak of social justice/activism, since moving to London two years ago Jessie has been become even more politically active, attending the Women's March alongside thousands of others after President Trump's inauguration, protesting outside Downing Street after Trump's Muslim ban and against a weapons expo in the city last year.

"It's an amazing feeling being with thousands of other people who feel the same as you, standing up for what you believe in," she says.

Since living in London, Jessie has also become more focused on climate change and the way in which small, seemingly insignificant, lifestyle changes can make a difference.

"I became vegetarian and am now vegan, and I also make a conscious effort to cut out plastic as much as possible, from bags to packaging. Even making the smallest decision can make a difference."

Jessie also credits her social activism to attending St John's in the City from age 11 to 22, where she was involved in a range of church activities, including youth group and Easter camps, as well as attending Presbyterian Church ministry events such as PYM's Going Further.

In 2013 she travelled to Myanmar where she attended Global Mission's Going Global. "It was a fantastic experience," she recalls. "Not only did it teach me about mission work but it also took me out of my comfort zone and taught me how to operate in situations that weren't familiar to me."

In fact, Jessie believes that taking responsibility in Presbyterian circles and stepping into leadership roles at a young age stood her in good stead for moving to London on her own.

"It definitely helped me to take a leap into the unknown and to know that everything is going to be okay. Having that Presbyterian Church experience has definitely shaped me into the person I am today."

Jessie was born in the UK where her father was on sabbatical at Oxford University but grew up in Wellington. She originally considered a career in academia but realised her passions lay in the visual communications field. She completed a Bachelor of Visual Communication Design (Hons) at Massey University in 2015 and headed straight to London.



Since moving to London Jessie Boston has been become even more politically active, attending the Women's March alongside thousands of others after President Trump's inauguration, protesting outside Downing Street after Trump's Muslim ban and also against a weapons expo.

Jessie landed her current digital producer job at Tearfund not long after arriving, thrilled to have found an organisation that aligns not only with her social conscience but also her Christian values.

"When I arrived for my interview, they asked if they could pray for me, which put me at ease. It also made me realise that these were the kind of people I wanted to work for."

Jessie now works in Tearfund's digital team on their website and social media, along with other visual collateral for campaigns as varied as disaster relief and changing policy across the 50 countries the agency operates in.

"I love working for an organisation that has at its core such strong Christian values and whose current slogan is 'We won't stop until poverty stops'. This job allows me to use my skills but also help people, serve a purpose and serve God."

While Jessie currently has no plans to return to New Zealand, she trusts that God will lead her where she is most needed. "I feel open to opportunities and going wherever the need is greatest. I'd encourage other young people to do the same if the opportunity arises for them. Pray about it and God will show you what to do."

Sharon Stephenson Spanz

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# ST HELIERS CENTRE FOR ALL CULTURES



Two of the three people sharing the role of cultural ambassador at St Heliers Presbyterian Church and Community Centre in Auckland – Ming Xie and Jacqueline Quick.

**St Heliers Presbyterian Church and Community Centre in Auckland is successfully moving towards its goal to be a multicultural complex that embraces people and faiths from different lands. Helping advance that goal is a PressGo grant of \$10,000.**

The funding was approved late last year, ensuring support for a 12-month project - "A Place at the Table".

Rev Pauline Stewart, minister and CEO of St Heliers Church and Community Centre, describes it as extending social invitations to people of other cultures, ages and backgrounds, making sometimes difficult 'head and heart' decisions around inclusion. "It asks if you are willing to do that, or will you retreat back to inviting to your table only those who look and sound like you. It is a huge challenge."

The project is 'phase two' of an initiative started in 2015 to build St Heliers multicultural capacity. Phase one kicked in around the time a \$4.25 million redevelopment of the centre was completed, and included the part-time appointment of their first cultural ambassador, Argentine-born Andrea Perez. The role is now a shared one, still involving Andrea, but also including British-born Jacqueline Quick and Taiwanese-born Ming Xie. Together they continue to build connections and organise outreach events.

Lending a hand with the initiative was Polish-born Anna Storck, then new to Auckland with seminar experience and a

doctorate in intercultural understanding and competence. In tandem with St Heliers' Rev Stan Stewart, she co-led the first 'Talk to Me' young adult conference in 2015, focused on intercultural competence and attracting attendees from around New Zealand and overseas. Such was its success that three more have since been held, organised from St Heliers but in partnership with Paeroa Care House, a ministry of Paeroa Cooperating Church.

St Heliers centre lounge also hosts intercultural gatherings, including monthly international dinners, a conversation club and social café. Pauline hopes to expand the concept into the nearby Glendowie Centre, leased to St Heliers by the Auckland City Council.

Migrants have gone on to become part of the leadership team. "On our staff we have Chilean, Armenian, Taiwanese, Brazilian, South African, Columbian and Russian people," Pauline explains. "Our tutors include French and Chinese. We need to understand each other – this is the future of the world."

"Jesus is the centre of everything here, and while I would like everyone to know that, I wouldn't expect all of them to become Christians. This is not about creating more Presbyterians. There are Iranians who are Muslims who come here – I wouldn't prevent them. They don't feel excluded, they are part of us."

Pauline describes the steps taken by St Heliers to include migrants in its future as "important and brave", although she concedes there was some resistance at first.

"Migrants are important for the health of the church, and the community, but there was a fear of the unknown," she explains. "This whole matter of welcoming other cultures, being willing to change who we are ... good church people challenge me. Our suburb has a mix of many different cultures; we want them to introduce their culture to us, their history, to tell us about their journey. We would never want to go back, and nor should we."

Funding from the \$10,000 PressGo grant will help cover wages and other areas of ministry, says Pauline, and will allow for outreach beyond St Heliers.

"While we have increased spending in some areas, we have also reduced it in others," she says. "I am always looking for a way to include some form of commercial activity. We consider this as crucial, and come hell or high water, we will find a way to keep it going. It is part of the journey to make a new future."

PressGo Catalyst Lisa Wells says there was ready support for the next stage of St Heliers new ventures in mission.

"The Presbyterian Church has made a commitment to become a cross-cultural and multicultural Church with a bicultural commitment, so it was pleasing to see the activities already underway. We support activities that are new ventures in mission. St Heliers is doing some great things, most very quietly and under the radar."

"We want to recognise the initiatives they are taking as they move further into mission with their community."

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



## WCC anniversary celebrates Christian unity



Former Church Moderator, the Very Rev Ray Coster, with two of the four North Korean delegation members who attended the 70th anniversary WCC event: Rev Myong Chol Kang (centre) and Hyok Chol Ri.

**The 70th anniversary of the founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in June was a landmark event that drew together the hopes of many in a singular purpose – unity.**

The importance of bringing different denominations together in a unified ecumenical family was the principal message presented at the 15-21 June event in Geneva, Switzerland.

The call to unity was also voiced by Presbyterian minister and former Church Moderator, the Very Rev Ray Coster, who represented New Zealand Presbyterians at the anniversary. Ray is also a member of the WCC Central Committee.

As the main governing body of WCC, the Central Committee represents New Zealand's Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist churches; Ray's eight-year term as New Zealand's representative of those churches will end with the 2021 WCC Assembly in Germany.

The 70th anniversary was significant not only as a gathering of international Christians but as one with some historic precedence. It marked the first time a Roman Catholic Church head, in this instance Pope Francis, had attended a WCC event, and claimed another first in the coming together of people from the Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic branches of the Church in an expression of "oneness in Christ".

Ray says while the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has never formally joined the WCC, the two bodies of the Christian Church have collaborated since the mid-1960s, promoting inter-religious dialogue and co-operation. "The visit of the Holy Father is a very visible sign of the WCC and the RCC working together."

The Pope's address to the gathering centred on the call to "spare no effort to respond to the Lord's will that all may be one", and urged members to "look courageously to the future, believing in unity". In a world he described as, "so beloved yet so deeply troubled", he called for a new evangelical outreach to change the course of history through the non-violent power of the Gospel.

Much of Pope Francis' message was echoed in an address by WCC General Secretary, the Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. He said the observance of the WCC's 70th anniversary signified a milestone many had long hoped for, one which saw members "walking, praying and working together" as churches woven together by Jesus Christ.

The Pope said: "The world we live in is in desperate need of signs that we can be reconciled and live together as one humanity".

Ray, who serves on Central Committee's Public Issues Committee, says business was conducted during plenary sessions at Assembly, during which presentations were given on topics that included Breaking Barriers, Ecumenical Diakonia, Experiences of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, and a Living Fellowship. Many other issues were raised and referred to the General Secretary for action, including the fallout from global conflicts, religious extremism, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence.

A special presentation at one of these plenary sessions was made by four members of the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) in North Korea. Three of the group's four participants had not been outside North Korea before. Ray says their attendance was significant as the WCC has been working for years towards peace on the Korean peninsula.

"While this is the second time members of the North Korean Churches have visited Central Committee, it is not the first time that WCC has arranged for North and South Korean Christian leaders to meet together." A first meeting took place in Switzerland in 1986.

Ray says unity, justice and peace were three key words he found particularly significant at the event. The WCC's 350 member churches represent some 500 million Christians in more than 110 countries, and Ray says many problems of injustice faced today cannot be faced by one denomination alone.

"But when we work with other Christians in the ecumenical family, we can."

Other highlights he noted was the service and dinner marking the WCC's 70th anniversary, and Pope Francis' gifting to him of a special medallion marking the important event.

After the 70th anniversary event concluded, Pope Francis celebrated a mass in Geneva for over 40,000 members of the Catholic community, some of whom travelled from other European countries to attend.

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



# YOUTH MINISTRY CREATES REAL CONNECTION

## THE JOURNEY

Winton's Central Southland Presbyterian youth group held a masquerade ball for 60 of their peers.

**A masquerade ball was a breakthrough experience for Central Southland Presbyterian Church's youth group, The Journey.**

Amy Williams, the Youth and Family Worker at Winton's Central Southland Presbyterian, asked the 12-16 year old members of The Journey for ideas around this year's National Youth Week theme: 'Be who you want to be'.

"We wanted to do something to celebrate the young people of our community. As there are not a lot of places they can go to have fun in a safe environment, we looked at holding an event," says Amy.

A member of the group pointed out that the Central Southland College ball was being held that week, but that they were too young to attend. So they decided to hold a Youth Masquerade Op-Shop Ball.

"The aim was to give young people an opportunity to experience something fun, affordable and accessible for all youth. I think they did really well. Our core group of about a dozen young people took individual responsibility for the different tasks, listened to each other and worked as a team.

"They made the tickets and posters, and everyone brought food for the supper. They fund-raised at the monthly market and charged a door fee of five dollars.

That money paid for decorations and a local DJ. They put on something for 60 of their peers, including a group from St Andrew's in Invercargill and the Salvation Army, and they enjoyed themselves. There was even a profit, which went towards travel costs to the Continuum youth conference in Invercargill."

Amy, who grew up in the Waikato, attended a Baptist church. At 23, having never been to Southland, she went to a camp at Pukerau. "On my return home, I felt God was calling me to Southland. I knew no one and had no grand plan. I wanted to help people, but not out of my own hurt. The move created a fresh start, and God has allowed me to discover who he is and who I am in him. That was eight years ago. I am now living my dream: I am married and working in a job I love," says Amy.

Three years ago she visited Rev Tekura Wilding, minister of Central Southland Presbyterian, and talked about youth work opportunities. "I forgot all about it, but two months later, Tekura rang me and asked if I would become the holiday programme coordinator."

The programme evolved into her current part-time role, and she is now doing a Presbyterian Youth Ministry internship and studying for a Bachelor of Ministry with Laidlaw College.

"I am pretty busy, but I love where God has placed me, this community and the opportunities that have come as a result

of allowing myself to be open to what God wants me to do," says Amy.

She has found the Presbyterian Youth Ministry programme supportive. "I've just been to Connect this year, the Queenstown Key Leaders Retreat last year and Going Further in 2016. They take such good care of us as leaders and give us opportunities for personal and professional growth.

"When I was younger I struggled with my own sense of identity and the concept of God loving me as I was. But I had people who believed in me and wanted to see me succeed, and this is what drives me now. I am passionate about bridging the gap between generations. As Christians we need each other, and we need to be mentors for each other."

She has found youth work highly satisfying. "I have had some profound experiences with young people on a one-to-one basis that I did not anticipate. Sometimes it is in the moment when there is a bad experience that there is a turnaround. You have to say the hard stuff they don't want to hear, but it is that which creates the shift.

"I believe it comes out of the uncomfortable position of having to be real. I call it 'the beautiful mess.' I never thought as I entered youth work that I would have to face some of the raw realities of people's experience and be confronted with such hardship. But in the mess of the reality, you bring the love of Jesus," says Amy.

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

# RURAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE COMES TO NZ

Delegates to the first International Rural Churches Association (IRCA) conference held in New Zealand have given the event an overwhelming “thumbs up”.

The 6th IRCA conference, held at Lincoln University from 15-21 April under the theme “Growing Together”, attracted almost 100 delegates. There were 26 people from New Zealand and 28 from Australia – including a contingent of Salvation Army officers – with the remainder representing the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Romania, India, Sri Lanka, France, French Polynesia, Canada and Fiji.

Conferences are held every four years, and have previously been hosted by England, India, Canada, Germany, and Malawi. This is the first time it has come to the antipodes.

Linda Cowan, who chaired the eight-strong ecumenical organising committee at the request of IRCA leadership group member and IRCA Oceania representative Rev Dr Robyn McPhail, said the fact there were so many different countries and denominations represented made it a “worthwhile and special experience”.

The International Rural Churches Association is a network of Christian people with a special interest in rural communities. Through the sharing of stories of struggle and hope, it encourages sustainable practices and voices the specific needs of rural communities worldwide.

Annual conferences aim at equipping rural church leaders to meet the challenges unique to rural ministry and share their global experiences. Conference delegates leave with actions that can be taken in their area, new resources and enhanced support networks.



Some of the approximately 100 delegates who attended the International Rural Churches Association conference in Lincoln – the first of its kind to be held in New Zealand.

Rev Dr Robyn McPhail's involvement with IRCA began around 2000, some two years after the group was formed. She came on board as the New Zealand contact tasked with planning a conference in India; she was named chairperson at that event and has remained involved with the leadership group ever since.

“The trans-Tasman relationship between rural churches goes back even further, with a four-yearly trans-Tasman conference held alternately between Australia and New Zealand,” she explains. “It is the trans-Tasman relationship that is developing into IRCA Oceania, to build up regional networks. I was chair of the first IRCA Oceania leadership group until 2016.”

Lincoln's selection as the 2018 conference venue was based on its affordability and ability to accommodate a large group of people on-site. “We got that plus much more,” says Robyn. “Overall the event was a delight; kind of like the icing on the cake of all the IRCA conferences I have attended.”

She said the conference speakers easily fulfilled its 2018 focus on being a “community of learning”.

“A large part of the learning happens through interactions with one another... growing together as we respond to input from keynote speakers and from case studies brought by participants.”

Dr Rosemary Dewerse, who was raised on a New Zealand farm at a time of crisis for the rural community, spoke on “Living and dreaming God's vision for our world”. Anglican minister, Rev Jenny Dawson, who has decades of involvement with the ecumenical movement, nationally

and internationally, spoke on “Shared ministry: a way of being church at the heart of rural ministry”.

Jerry Marshall, chairperson of IRCA and until recently CEO of Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre, a UK churches' rural resource unit, facilitated learning community sessions at the conference.

Linda, a member of The Village Presbyterian Church in Bryndwr, Christchurch, member of The Canterbury Lay Preachers Association, and former principal of Waitaki Girls' High School, said while organising sizeable events was “familiar territory”, credit for the smooth-running of the conference should go to the commitment of committee members and the local churches.

“We are indebted to the local churches. The hospitality shown by church people from Ellesmere, Darfield, Hororata and Lincoln was quite exceptional. Delegates were picked up at the airport by local church people and delivered to Lincoln, and church people baked biscuits for afternoon teas and suppers,” she says. “Some people joined us for the evening programmes.”

Feedback from delegates gave a big tick to the conference administration and organisation, describing it as “superb” and expressing appreciation for detailed attention to the sharing of resources – including the packaging of presentations on a USB stick.

Topics suggested for future discussion included mental health, self-care in isolated service, lay leader development, and the theology of rural ministry.

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



## Presbyterian's mission to train health workers

**Nicola Young is helping the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu with training courses for health workers.**

When Nicola arrived in Vanuatu three-and-a-half years ago with her husband Sean and son James, a disaster helped them form fast and enduring relationships with the local community, church groups and NGOs.

Cyclone Pam hit shortly after their arrival, and Nicola, a registered nurse with a post-graduate degree in public health, went to work. "I assisted with triaging children in the Children's Outpatient Clinic as hospital staff could not come to work after the cyclone. Many children were presenting with post-disaster illnesses, including diarrhoea and vomiting, pneumonia and skin infections.

"It was a challenging time but it helped us network very quickly. It led to my becoming a volunteer administrator for a new trainee intern programme for doctors. They train in Cuba and other countries and need support when they arrive back here."

Nicola then worked with the health delivery team of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV). She travelled with a health outreach team in 2016.

"I really like the PCV way of operating, with Ni-Vanuatu people leading the governance structure and local staff being developed in eye and dental care, and moving into the primary health space," she says.

In 2017, a PCV team worked on a national oral health survey. "We took samples, did a survey on diet and worked with visiting dentists. There was a lot of logistics required, so I worked in the office with an Australian volunteer and the local team



Nicola Young, left, and Annette Vincent assisted a Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu health team with a national oral health survey.

at PCV health. When Annette Vincent arrived with her husband Martyn, she joined us on that project.

"I went on one of the survey trips to the remote Shepherds Islands, gathering data and doing health checks. When we go out into the field, we work alongside the local nurses and Village Health Workers helping to build their capabilities and problem solve. The Village Health Workers are the first point of contact for health in remote communities. They provide first aid and health promotion, deliver some medications, such as antibiotics, and do well child and antenatal checks. They arrange for people to get to the next level of care, referring patients on to dispensaries and health centres. They also do work around sanitation, hygiene and nutrition."

The PCV recently devised a course for Village Health Workers for the Korvan Community Health School, which was donated by the Korean Presbyterian Church and has a memorandum of understanding with the Health Ministry.

Korvan and the PCV won the tender to deliver the course. Nicola supported the local nurse teacher. "The church was also able to provide pastoral care to the students, who come from all over the islands. We had several pastors and elders supporting us to provide that care to the students as well as teaching," says Nicola.

"I've been really pleased to be part of the PCV network here. I felt out on a limb

before I was working with them. Now I feel supported and part of a team."

Nicola is devising a nine-month certificate course for nurse aides, working with a steering group, the Ministry of Health and the nursing school. "We aim to have it signed off with the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority ready for teaching next year," she says.

Nicola does not get paid for her work, but is now supported with a small allowance from the Presbyterian Church's Global Mission.

She finds the work she is doing extremely fulfilling. "I have worked in health for 30 years, having graduated at 19, so I have seen a lot of change in health systems. I think, working here, that there is huge potential for really good primary health care. For example, twenty per cent of children suffer from malnutrition, which can affect brain development. So doing this work supporting grass roots health workers about nutrition and other important primary health care areas, I feel I am helping to make difference in the country.

"Our son is learning a lot too. As a family we have found it really satisfying. We don't think we are going to change the world, but we can make a small difference and be respectful to the people here and help them lead themselves – and that's why we are here."

Jane Tolerton **Spanz**

## Rebuilt church ready to host General Assembly

**The rebuild of the William Gray Memorial Church on Vanuatu's Tanna Island has spiritual links to the site it occupies.**

It acknowledges the esteem in which the local Waisisi community holds the church's namesake. William Gray was one of the first missionaries welcomed to the area in the mid-1800s, and is considered to have played a key part in introducing Tanna, and the wider Vanuatu community, to the Gospel.

The construction itself is unusual. Waisisi might mean the "Way is Easy", but the rebuild has been anything but for the locals. They laboured hard on the earthworks, hauled sand from the beach far below to make the blocks by hand, and collected coral from the beach for the concrete work.

Materials shipped from Port Vila faced frequent delays on the 10-hour crossing, then on arrival in Tanna, were stalled further as old vehicles battled barely-there roads to deliver them to site. At one point, when a storm washed out the road to Waisisi, materials were carried manually down the hill to the building site.

So, no, not an easy build by any reckoning, but in the words of one of those behind it, Rev Dr Jaco Reyneke of St Paul's Co-operating Church Papamoa, the impact on the community and the Waisisi congregation has been "astounding".

Quoting feedback from the community, he said: "Something is happening here. Before people go to their gardens in the morning, they come to the church. In the afternoons they come to look at its



The rebuild of Tanna Island's William Gray Memorial Church has been a faith-driven community project.

progress again. They are amazed...they can see God is big and can do big things."

Jaco's first links with the community were in October 2017 while part of a Marine Reach medical outreach on board the MV Pacific Hope. On hearing he was a Presbyterian minister, the Waisisi congregation invited him to lead a service in the church ruins. Built in 1974, it had been destroyed in 2015's Cyclone Pam.

Jaco heard how the community clung to hope that it might be restored, particularly when news came that the church would be the venue for the 26 August opening service of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu's 2018 General Assembly. Attending that celebration will be the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand Moderator, the Rt Rev Richard Dawson, Global Mission co-ordinator, Rev Phil King, and members of the Vanuatu-based Global Mission team.

Buoyed by that initial hope, the congregation applied unflinching faith to overcome financial hardship and save enough to buy an initial 10 lengths of roof iron – a remarkable start.

An approach to Phil resulted in the allocation of NZ\$9,000 from the Moderator's Cyclone Pam disaster fund to the project and brought Neville Jones on board. Church elder Neville has been living in Vanuatu for the past two years, helping the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) achieve its goals. He works closely with the Church's Global Mission office and has co-ordinated logistics for the rebuild on Tanna.

The Kaimai Presbytery approved the project, granted Jaco permission to raise funds and agreed to administrate the funds. Neville, in consultation with the community, costed the project at NZ\$36,500 – but fundraising efforts proved so successful that Jaco was able to inform Neville that the target had been reached and that the \$9,000 from the Moderator's Fund would not be needed. Residual funds will cover cost variations and will likely buy another water tank, and go towards seating for the church.

Jaco said donations had come in from many individuals and congregations, including the Cambridge Union Church, proceeds from the sale of an op-shop in Cambridge, the Matamata Mission in Motion, and even the Evangelical Church in the United States. His own church hosted a variety concert, with \$500 of the \$1500 raised going to purchase four gravity lights, which use the weight of sand in bags to operate the light-generating mechanism.

"Overall, we provided cement, timber, steel reinforcement, roof iron, hurricane strips, roof screws and the like," said Jaco. "Builders from the community built the whole church, with volunteer labour from the community."

Accompanied by his son, Bernard, and Minette Soekoe of the Afrikaans Christian Church in Tauranga, Jaco visited Tanna in July. They helped where they could, while Minette and Bernard also painted murals on the walls.

The church is set for completion by late August.

Viv Posselt [Spanz](#)



## THANK YOU FROM TONGA



Trish Murray

Cyclone Gita caused devastation at Livi's home. The corrugated iron roof was blown from her house soaking everything inside. Her main source of income, a large breadfruit tree, was toppled.

*February's Cyclone Gita caused widespread damage on Tonga's main island of Tongatapu and more southern 'Eua. The category four storm affected around 78,000 people, destroying homes and livelihoods. Christian World Service (CWS) is grateful for support from Presbyterian churches and individuals to the appeal which raised more than \$100,000. In addition, CWS received \$164,000 from the New Zealand Government aid programme for local partner Ama Takiloa [the women's programme of Tonga Community Development Trust] to repair rainwater systems, re-establish gardens and improve household income. This money will assist families who have made temporary repairs and may have lost jobs, gardens and livelihoods.*

At first, it is the younger Sela who takes the lead. She talks about all that has happened since Cyclone Gita stormed the island of 'Eua, a seven-minute plane trip from Nuku'alofa. Chair of her local Ama Takiloa group, she says they have remained strong, despite widespread damage. Partly sheltered by a hill, Sela lost only her bathroom. Others fared worse and she says it has been important to work together to support their community.

It takes a while, but soon Livi begins to tell her story. Away at the time Cyclone Gita hit, she rushed home to find devastation. The corrugated iron roof had blown from her house soaking everything inside, and her large breadfruit tree toppled.

Her main source of income, the orange harvest, had gone. Talking to CWS International Programmes Coordinator Trish Murray, Livi says her two sons have replaced the roof but it needs gutters. Repairs are also needed to the rainwater tank so that she has her own water supply.

When Trish visited both islands in June, she found the women eager to talk about their experiences and affirm the great strength they found in belonging to their local Ama Takiloa group.

Sela says the group has maintained the monthly inspections, central to Ama Takiloa's programme. Members visit each other's homes checking on tidiness, noting any improvements and inspecting newly made crafts and home gardens. There is plenty of time for conversation in these friendly visits.

Keeping this regular routine has been important to the women's recovery says Trish. Many experienced major losses and they have been able to encourage and sometimes help each other out.

Growing up Ama Takiloa was part of Sela's life. She learned traditional crafts like tapa making and weaving from her mother, who was a member. Sela has invited younger women to join so these skills are nurtured and they feel part of the movement.

The women are making crafts to sell at their annual show in December and to exhibit at the Royal Agricultural Show where Ama Takiloa hold a stall. With few opportunities to earn cash, they need to

earn as much as they can to cover family expenses and pay for much needed repairs on their homes.

Gita destroyed the community hall where the women often came together, as well as the one at the local high school. Unable to use the newly built local church hall, they have nowhere to make the large tapa together or smaller individual projects in the company of others. Working at home, they miss the conversation and fun they once had together.

A network of more than 300 women's groups, Ama Takiloa is at the heart of local communities so when they came visiting as part of the assessment process, people were glad to see them and talk about their difficulties. It is the first response to a disaster that receives the headlines, but long after the media and emergency crews have gone, local partners are well placed to find the gaps and meet needs that can cause long-term poverty. This time more support has gone to the outer islands and Ama Takiloa has found that some of those most in need live in Kolofo'ou, a suburb of Nuku'alofa.

Experts in gardening and rainwater harvesting, Ama Takiloa plans to repair rainwater systems for more than 160 families and install ten community water tanks. They will provide seeds, plants and other help so at least 400 families can reestablish home gardens and ten community gardens. A further 140 households will shortly receive pigs, chickens or ducks with training in animal husbandry.

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