

sPanz

Spanning Presbyterians In Aotearoa New Zealand

March 2006, Issue 26

"He called
a child,
whom he put among them."¹

(Matt 18:2)

www.presbyterian.org.nz

COMMENT

Comment is a column where guest writers express their opinion on church or social issues

Where are the children?

I attended a meeting of church leaders, including ministers and elders. The guest speaker talked about ministry to young people. Near me a voice said, 'This really doesn't apply to us. We haven't any children in our church'. They were not concerned about this as the members of their church community were all senior citizens. I was shocked. I know of no geographical areas in the vicinity where there are no children.

What is the future of the church if there are no children? The people of Israel were told to pass on God's commands, "Never forget these commands that I am giving you. Teach them to your children" (Deut. 6:7). A church without children is a dying church. The future of our church and our nation rests with our children.

Each church needs to use the needs of its community as an opportunity for mission. One door of opportunity is the local school. Many schools are looking for values programmes. The Churches

Education Commission has a Religious Education programme that relates to our primary schools. It is amazing how much can be achieved in a weekly 30-minute programme. It is essentially a seed sowing ministry, but sometimes we have evidence of fruit. The following letter was received by a religious education teacher from an 11 year old boy:

*Dear Mrs
[name omitted for privacy]
Thank you for teaching us about Bible.
At Korea my mother is always believe Buddha. I want to believe god but my mum won't let me.
I'm always believe Buddha but I know Jesus now. I will believe Jesus when I go back to Korea but I think my mum won't let me. Thank you for teach us. Do you know that I bought a Bible. I read Bible every day. I'm very interested and I think 5 or 6 months ago we do some dramatics, and you chose me I have to do soldier. I think at that time I was very shy but I just did it you helped me. Thank you so much. Maybe we can meet again. [SIC]*

From [name omitted for privacy]

Until she received the letter the teacher was unaware of the child's commitment as he was very shy.

We have a tremendous opportunity in our schools – a mission on our doorstep. A child in our church commented, "It's easy to talk to other children at our school about Jesus because we have Bible in School". It is vital for Christian parents to be on Boards of Trustees. In our area we lost one school because there was only one Christian on the Board, who was then outnumbered. The opposition can be very forceful and vocal.

If you want to reach out to children, look for opportunities. Try a short-term programme such as a one-week holiday programme. Scripture Union has very effective programmes and personnel to help

you. If the programme goes well you can do another or maybe try a kids' club. Halloween is another opportunity. Our church has held "Light" parties for families in the community, which provide an alternative to Halloween. They have included a chance to dress up (no scary costumes allowed), fun activities, games, sweets, a sausage sizzle, candyfloss and a speaker. All children had to be accompanied by an adult. When local schools were approached they were supportive in publicising the event.

There are children out there in the community and we cannot be obedient to the Gospel if we overlook them. Jesus' command in the Great Commission was to all people: "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples ... and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mat 28:19-20). Children are people. If we ignore them many will be lost "It is not the Father's will that one of there little ones should be lost" (Mat 18:14).

- Margaret Liow is the Community Minister at St Columba at Botany Downs, Auckland. [sPanz](#)

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Presbyterian host for Praise Be



Television New Zealand

Long-serving Praise Be host Mr Graeme Thomson (right) with his successor the Rev Chris Nichol.

Presbyterian minister the Rev Chris Nichol is about to become the new face of Praise Be, Television New Zealand's key religious programme.

Wellington-based Mr Nichol succeeds Graeme Thomson, who has been Praise Be's host since its inception in 1986.

Praise Be, which TV One screens 44 times a year on Sunday mornings, features religious music recorded in different New Zealand towns and cities. The programme has been identified with traditional hymns, although some contemporary songs have been introduced in recent years.

Mr Nichol will be introduced to the Praise Be audience by Mr Thomson during two special 20th anniversary programmes to screen on 5 and 12 March.

His first show, which is an on-location special being filmed in late February in Christchurch, will follow on 19 March.

Mr Nichol is not a stranger to the programme: he produced Praise Be for three years during the early 90s, when the show was based in Christchurch. He has also been involved in editing its scripts for the past 15 years.

Mr Nichol says Praise Be is a music programme rather than a church service. While it features religious music, like all television its first goal is to entertain its audience.

"Good television is always entertainment in some sense."

But music isn't merely entertainment, he says, because it can cut to the quick of people's spirituality.

Mr Nichol says Praise Be's audience at the moment could be described as "older", particularly in terms of people who would

like to attend a church service on a Sunday morning but are unable to. But at the same time, it also has a more diverse audience that uses it as a background to their other Sunday morning activities around the house.

"We want to evolve the audience a little younger," he says. This means targeting people in their 40s and 50s, which TVNZ has reflected in its choice of a new host from that age group.

Traditional hymns will remain a significant part of the programme, Mr Nichol says, but its scope will be widened slightly to attract this broader audience.

He says TVNZ has demonstrated a real commitment to the programme, with strategic planning that goes beyond its funding cycle. The programme is fully funded by New Zealand on Air, on a year-by-year basis.


Because Praise Be is funded from the public purse, it's not appropriate for it to be overtly evangelistic, Mr Nichol says.

However, he says that the programme is an expression of contemporary Christian communities and "the best evangelism is people living out lives of faith".

Though he has observed Mr Thomson being approached by admirers, Mr Nichol says he doesn't expect to acquire a new level of fame. He's more likely to become a rock star, he quips: his alt-country band, the Dunstan Rangers, is putting out an album in April.

Mr Nichol remains Presbyterian Support Central's general manager of communications, fundraising and marketing; a position that takes up four days a week.

By Amanda Wells **sPanz**



² He called a child, whom he put among them, ³ and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven". (Matt 18:2-4)

Children and church

Maybe you grew up going to Sunday school. You remember nativity plays, Bible stories, and playing hide and seek in the supplies cupboard. Or perhaps you remember a parent dragging you to the door, sermons masquerading as children's talks and the hours of waiting for mum or dad to finally finish their cup of tea...

Things have changed. Today's children's programmes are dynamic, engaging and fun, and the challenges they face are totally different from those confronting yesterday's Sunday school teachers.

Taking the Christian message to children is not without its controversy. Last year's Narnia film provoked accusations of subtle brainwashing. But The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe resonates only if you're familiar with the foundations of the Jesus' life story (perhaps from those youthful Sunday school sessions). Do today's children have this knowledge?

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand statistics show that attendance levels at children's programmes have remained

fairly static during the past 10 years, averaging about 8,500. But New Zealand's population has grown significantly during this time.

US research suggests that if you become a Christian before you hit the teenage years, the chance of long-term commitment is much greater. According to the George Barna study Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions, published in 2003, "after their first decade, most people simply refine their views as they age without a wholesale change in those leanings... A person's response to the meaning and personal value of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection is usually determined before a person reaches eighteen."

Emily Wotton, who was recently appointed youth, children and family ministry co-ordinator for the Auckland Presbytery region, says teaching children values and nurturing in them a sense of belonging to a church community can't start too early.

"The sooner you get that engaged, the more likely they will get through the teenage years without too much rocking and rolling."

Jill Kayser, of the Presbyterian Kids Friendly programme, which aims to resource parishes to intentionally minister to children and families, says teaching children about God's love for them and telling them that Jesus told us to love others in this way is "entirely appropriate".

Children's ministry has to be more than just entertainment or hospitality, she says. "Its prime focus should be about enabling children to fully experience the love and community of God."

When asked about their experiences of church, children at St Heliers Presbyterian Church in Auckland said they enjoyed having church friends of all ages with whom they feel safe and loved. They felt special when they could contribute to worship by helping the minister or elders or reading or singing in church. Church family camps were popular because they gave opportunities to hang out with friends from church. The children also enjoyed the chance to use gifts and skills in music and drama performances.

Mrs Kayser says children want to feel like they belong. "They want to believe that they are truly nurtured and needed and if they didn't come to church they would be sorely missed."

Kids who go to church without their families are generally not "sent" but choose to go themselves because they have a friend who goes or because they have developed positive relationships with church leaders through initiatives such as holiday programmes, she says. Parents generally don't object to children attending church without them, believing it "can't do any harm".

Mrs Wotton says changes in Sunday school programmes reflect the way that education has changed during the past few decades. Children are no longer taught by rote nor expected to memorise facts. Instead they are given a variety of tools to sift through contemporary society's information overload.

Most children no longer know Bible basics, she says, which can make children's ministry much harder. Rather than starting with a Bible story and generalising back to life lessons, contemporary resources look for other, more familiar ways to engage their young audience before introducing the Bible.

For example, one teaching series examines the story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, drawing on the naughty children's characters to illustrate different sins and on the example of Charlie to illustrate handling temptation. Applicable memory verses are introduced once each session's message is understood.

Most churches with dynamic children's programmes have several people in co-ordinating roles, along with volunteers in the classroom. Mrs Kayser says volunteers must be part of the ministry's planning process and feel part of its vision.

"Always remember to thank them and invite them to reflect on and share why they volunteer their services."

To pay staff is to recognise their commitment of time and also to attract those who would otherwise have to work elsewhere, she says. "If it is appropriate to pay a minister, then it is appropriate to pay a children's minister."

Perhaps this is the bottom line: churches investing in best practice children's ministry, including community outreach, are bucking the trend and continuing to grow.

By Amanda Wells *sPanz*

Kids Friendly: dreaming new dreams

The successes of the Kids Friendly initiative, which was piloted in Auckland during 2004 and 2005, will soon be shared with Presbyterian churches across New Zealand.

Kids Friendly coach Jill Kayser says the positive response from churches participating in the Council for World Mission-funded trial prompted a search for further funding that would allow the project to be extended nationwide.

While Kids Friendly is fully endorsed by and exclusive to the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, the project does not receive funding from the Assembly budget. Funding for the nationwide expansion has been secured from the Presbyterian Savings and Development Society, the Presbyterian Foundation and the Presbytery of Dunedin.

Kids Friendly's aims were formulated in response to AC Nielsen research commissioned by the Presbyterian Church in 2002. The two-year pilot project saw Mrs Kayser and Emily Wotton work with eight Auckland and South Auckland churches to help them intentionally minister to children and families and to bring them up to the Kids Friendly standard.

Says Mrs Kayser: "Our brief was to develop a children's ministry best-practise manual, but we soon discovered that churches needed to explore why they should be Kids Friendly before we could advise them on how to be Kids Friendly."

Mrs Kayser said that participating churches really valued the one-on-one coaching sessions. Written resources, which include the Kids Friendly Ideals Review, Safety in Children's Ministry and Employing a Children's Ministry Worker documents are also available to churches joining the Kids Friendly network.

Mrs Kayser says there are two ways that churches can access Kids Friendly: "All Presbyterian and Uniting churches are invited to join the Kids Friendly network and receive the Kids Friendly newsletter *Hands On* as well as email news, ideas and resources, invitations to children's ministry events and advice on Kids Friendly issues and requirements. For a donation of \$75, Presbyterian and Uniting churches can purchase the Kids Friendly resource file.

"In addition to this, churches may opt to sign a contract with the Kids Friendly co-ordinator to work to become a Kids Friendly church. This entails a commitment by the minister, children's ministry worker and session clerk to work through the Kids Friendly ideals and self-review document and set goals. It involves regular coaching meetings with the Kids Friendly co-ordinator on topics/issues identified through the self-review process and a willingness to brand your church as Kids Friendly (a fee applies).

"Our vision is to create a Presbyterian Church renowned for the way it serves and embraces children and families. We dream of our churches being places where children are welcomed, celebrated and nurtured, where children belong and participate in the life and worship of the faith community, where they can explore and experience the love of Christ and where they are valued for the immense love, life and witness they bring to the whole church family," says Mrs Kayser.

For more information, contact
Jill Kayser, Kids Friendly coach

Telephone: 09-5850959 / 5759836,
Mobile: 027-2103784, Fax: 09-5754827

kidsfriendlyjill@sthelierschurch.org.nz,
100 St Heliers Bay Road, Auckland 5

Or check out the Kids Friendly page at
www.presbyterian.org.nz/kidsfriendly

Fronting-up

Members of the Connect Band from Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church in Newtown, Wellington talk about their musical ministry.

What does your role/work involve?

In a nutshell, our primary role is to lead people into worship. This subsequently involves a lot of commitment, discipline, hard work and sacrifice.

Why did you choose this ministry?

We feel like this ministry chose us, really. We started out with a four-piece band nine years ago because we wanted to enhance the worship within our youth. And God has slowly called more people to join and enhance this ministry, so we have grown into a ten-piece band now. We really love music, we love to serve and we love the Lord – it's just perfect!

What have you learned about God through his work?

We've definitely learnt a lot and we expect to learn a lot more. Some key things we've learnt along this journey are:

- All things are possible through God
- Faith, Faith, Faith – believe that God will deliver, never doubt his word
- God accepts us for who we are and he speaks to us in different ways
- Learn your word! – it is your sword against darkness
- Learn to serve/have a servant heart and be faithful.

What is the most exciting thing about being involved in it?

A few things spring to mind as the most exciting: first, seeing God's spirit touch people's hearts through the music we play; second, knowing we are making a difference; and thirdly, the fellowship.

What have been the biggest challenges?

Finding time to rehearse as everyone is heavily involved in other ministries.

Who has inspired you?

Jesus – of course! Mo Mansill – just for her passion, work ethic and encouragement to grow this ministry; Steve and Ruth Millward from Mangatangi – their passion in making a positive impact for God, commitment and serving hearts is truly inspirational; Parachute Band; Hillsongs; and the Connect conference.



Where to from here?

In the long term, we hope to make this a full-time ministry and grow it internationally. Medium term, we hope to grow this ministry nationally, especially within the Presbyterian Church. And short term, we want to write original praise and worship songs and release an album.

Do you have any recommended books/CDs?

Without being cheesy, we seriously recommend the Bible as a must to read. For CD's, try Hillsongs, Parachute Band, Ron Kenoly and CeCe Winans.

Where can I learn more about what you do/listen to you perform?

We are playing at some awesome events throughout the year.

- Connect conference in July
- Faith Festival Otago: 24 – 27 February 2006
- Faith Festival Mangatangi: March 2007

We welcome you to come and join us in fellowship at our church – Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church in Newtown, Wellington. We lead worship for the youth services on the first Sunday of every second month from April 2006. [sPanz](#)

 Presbyterian Youth Ministry 

www.presbyterian.org.nz/youth

Your one-stop-shop for information about
PYM events, activities and resources



check it out!

Busy year ahead for PYM

What's happening with Presbyterian youth ministry this year? HEAPS!

Connect, the Presbyterian youth leaders' gathering, will be held from 30 June-2 July at Forest Lakes camp near Otaki. Its theme will be "Evangelism – making Jesus Christ known". Check out the PYM webpages for more details about Connect as they come to hand: www.presbyterian.org.nz/youth

Going Somewhere, an eight-week discipleship programme for emerging leaders, kicks off in terms two and three. The regions involved include Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland.

Other upcoming events of interest include Faith Fest in Mosgiel on February 24-26 (the North Island version happened in South Auckland late last year). And preparations for Easter camps around the country are well underway – check with your local youth leaders.

At the PYM office...

National Youth Co-ordinator Mo Mansill stepped down from her role at the end of 2005 and will be studying this year for a postgraduate diploma in theology.

The PYM focus group, which is made up of 12 youth workers from around the country and has been shaping the vision of youth ministry during the past three years, will continue to drive the PYM vision, in conjunction with national mission enabler John Daniel.



As focus group member Mareta Ford says: "God isn't going to let this one go, and there is going to be a lot of collaboration from everyone in our Church to work together".

The group has been looking into the best way to resource youth ministry in the Presbyterian Church, and is excited about the possibilities the future holds. Meanwhile, Dunedin-based student Jo Ryan, who was the PYM intern in 2003, is being employed part-time to look after PYM administration.

Enquires about PYM administrative matters, events and resources can be directed to youth@presbyterian.org.nz. Mail for PYM should be sent to this address: PYM, c/- the Synod of Otago and Southland, P O Box 1131, Dunedin. [sPanz](#)

CD PICKS



David Crowder Band

A Collision

While attending a Texas Christian college in 1996, David Crowder realized that the majority of his fellow students were not churchgoers and he formed a Baptist church to cater for them. Crowder led worship at the new church, and eventually began writing his own songs. From such organic beginnings, the group's popularity has grown to the extent that *A Collision* was number two on the iTunes online music store charts shortly after its release. Ambitious yet firmly worship focused, *A Collision* deserves respect for covering songs by both English composer Vaughan Williams and Indie hero Sufjan Stevens, as well as including country gospel perennial "I Saw The Light". This eclecticism mixed with the group's own punchy worship style fuels an extremely impressive statement.



Bic Runga

Birds

Following the ornate music of 2002's *Beautiful Collision*, the first lady of New

Zealand pop presents a darker and sparser third release. Informed by the death of her father, these reflections of loss are underscored with a jazzy feel from a classy backing band including Neil Finn on piano, and Anika Moa and Shayne Carter on backing vocals. Even though *Birds* sometimes ventures into cabaret pop or Nina Simone territory, Runga's pop sensibilities are still displayed in tracks like the opening "Winning Arrow". More subtle and mature than Runga's previous work, *Birds* does take a few listens to sink in, but it is a strong and personal statement from an artist who continues to grow and challenge herself with each release.

Graham Fyfe is a musician for Knox-St Columba Church, Lower Hutt

Constantly CHALLENGING

"The lecturers at Bible College of New Zealand are constantly challenging us to read, research, analyse, and reflect about issues in the light of scripture. As I learn to critically reflect on my faith, they become my beliefs, Jesus becomes my Lord..."

– Angeline (Bachelor of Divinity Student)



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It has been predicted that the Church will have a shortfall of ministers by 2010 due to the number of retirements. Josephine Reader investigates the impact of an ageing minister population on the future of the Church.

Leaders needed: apply here

As many of our congregation members move into their twilight years, our ministers are heading in the same direction. With ministers' average age at 55, the upward trend in retirements is expected to continue. In recent years the number of ministers retiring has out-stripped the number graduating from the School of Ministry by about four to one.

Receptions from other denominations (both within New Zealand and from overseas) must be taken into account, as these help off-set the number of people retiring. With an average of just under four receptions per annum over the past five years – although with 11 requests last year alone, this average may be on the way up – there still appears to be a need for more ministers.

Convener of the Church's Leadership Subcommittee the Rev Martin Baker believes that we will only have a shortage of ministers if the forms of ministry and number of

parishes stay the same over the next decade and beyond.

Mr Baker advocates liquefying some of our assets, such as investments and property, and using these resources to support the new forms of ministry that he believes are needed to take the Church into the future.

Assembly Executive Secretary, the Rev Dr Kerry Enright, suggests that the model of one minister serving one parish will be the exception rather than the rule in the future.

He suggests that an increase in the number of part-time ministry roles, ministers who resource a range of congregations and localities, and ministers undertaking a different range activities are among the possibilities for how we will be ministering in the future. He believes that the Church should be "actively and assertively recruiting for new forms of ministry" now to help prepare for the next decade and beyond.

Congregations' capacity to afford full-time stipended ministry is expected to be a significant factor shaping both the forms of ministry and number of ministers needed in future. While no detailed analysis has been completed, based on an estimate that income of \$100,000 pa is required to sustain full-time ministry and mission, it is estimated that approximately two-thirds of our parishes may not be in a position to financially support a full-time minister.

The financial situation of parishes is only one factor having an impact on retirements. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are high levels of dissatisfaction among ministers with the current level of stipend. This may also be a factor in people retiring from ministry. A recent survey found that the stipend was not the primary source of income for 53 percent of Presbyterian ministers, which suggests that many people are choosing to use their training in other professional fields.

So, what is the Church doing to stem the flow of ministers leaving ministry? Mr Baker and Mr Enright both say that development of new ministry solutions for today's environment is a big part of ensuring we have sufficient leaders to take the church forward in the future.

Mr Baker says: "We can't continue with the same models that we've had. We need to think about fundamentally different ways of being. We need to be bold and courageous and make strategic decisions."

Some of the other things the Church is doing (or planning to do) to support the development of leaders in the future include:

- A review of the stipend. This is under-way and findings are due to be reported to the wider church shortly;
- Plans to remove the compulsory retirement age provision in the Book of Order, although this is subject to General Assembly approval;
- The development of alternative ministry models, such as local ministry teams and local ordained ministry;

- Updating the training models and material used by the School of Ministry to help prepare ministers for ministry in a changing environment;
- A greater emphasis on training lay people for ministry.

Encouraging more people to enter ministry is also part of the solution. Mr Enright and Mr Baker agree that a proactive recruitment campaign to attract people to Ministry of Word and Sacrament is needed.

The Otago University School of Theology reports that the number of people studying theology has remained relatively steady over the past ten years. While no specific data is available on the number of people entering ministry training across all denominations, anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been a decline over the past 20 years. So while people continue to be interested in theology, this is often not accompanied by a call to ministry.

Mr Baker says recruitment of ministers is one of the priorities for the Leadership Sub-committee.

"Our overall vision is supporting ministry to enable the church to grow and flourish in the future, and this means we need to rethink the models that underpin our recruitment, training and support." **sPanz**

Retirements advised to General Assembly

	retirements
2004	28
2002	37
2000	29
1998	14
1996	16
1994	11

Profile of ministers in New Zealand (all denominations):

- 3,489 people were employed as ministers of religion in 2001
- 66 percent are 45 years of age or older
- 84 percent were employed full-time
- 25 percent were female

Source: Statistics New Zealand



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SPANZ 3/05

Playing the numbers game

Mark died last year. We celebrated a life lived well, a Christian character that was inspirational, and gifts shared with us over many years in music. He was a valued person in our congregation. Mark was number 94 on our membership roll. With his death our total roll number became one fewer.

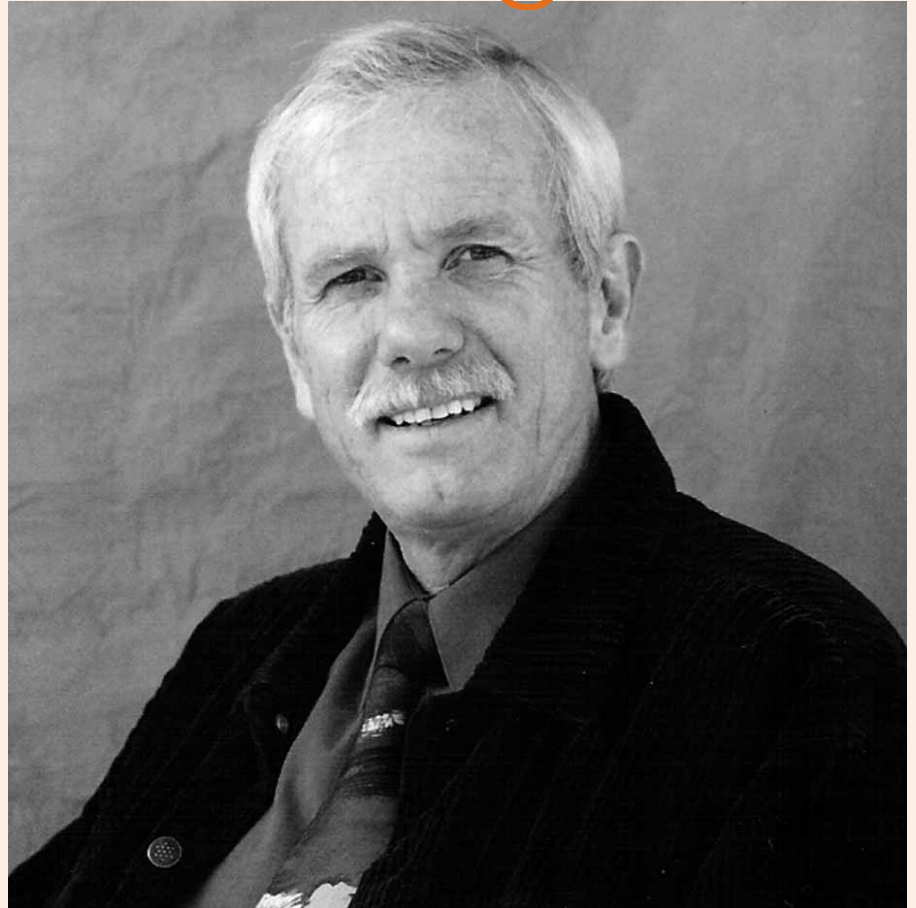
Numbers are all around us, and they are important. Why else check the bank statement, departure time, or anniversary date? Numbers are also important in local congregations, for in that setting numbers mean people; people who are named, cared for, and who offer resources for the work of Jesus Christ. And embracing the value and gifts of 67 is a blessing beyond 53.

Wait - did someone say that we shouldn't play the numbers game? Well some games are serious – not the here-today-gone-tomorrow variety. Congregations engage in serious games and there are several options for games we can play: for example, the declining numbers game, or the only-one-age-group numbers game, or the growing numbers game. These are games that all involve people.

As we face the opportunities of 2006, as we embrace the mission imperative of Jesus Christ in our various settings, it is important that we have a game plan that seeks to grow the number of people who are part of our local fellowship. Growing numbers of people – would we dare?

Yes we dare, for the grace of God compels us. Haven't our lives been transformed by grace? Do we not look back and trace the touch of grace on the ups and downs of life? Is grace not amazing, surprising, beautiful and bountiful? And does not receiving grace lead us to being gracious? More than that – we long that others may also experience grace: one by one, more, many.

Dare for growing numbers of people? Yes, for the mission of Jesus Christ compels us. The whole world is his concern; every generation and culture his vision, and every family and person loved. So we dare not become satisfied with the numbers currently in our congregation, or content with slowly becoming fewer. We long that others may see the Gospel, and hear it, and experience it.



Further we know that each person offers time and energy and gifts for the ongoing work of mission; the work of serving the needy, of worship, of social justice, of evangelism, of pastoral care, of caring for creation. There is a reality check here: if many of our congregations do not grow in numbers of people, then many of the significant ministries they offer will have a short life indeed. Mission requires resources and resources are found primarily in people, who will only offer them for mission out of a faith relationship with our God of grace. So, growth is not so much about survival, but about having a long-term view and of being faithful to the mission of Jesus Christ.

This is where the missionary Spirit of Christ would drive us – to grow the number of people embraced in the life and ministry of the Church. Trace the story of the Spirit in Acts: prodding, urging, driving the followers of Christ to cross new barriers,

to deal with their prejudices, to try new approaches, to accept change, to work strategically, to communicate the good news of their Lord and see more people come to faith in Him.

One thing we do have is multiple and significant connections with the people of our communities. Local congregations have built bridges of compassion and service and respect. One of the challenges of today's context is to learn how to take the Gospel across those bridges in a way that enables people to come to faith and into the Fellowship of the Church. Growing numbers of people – people like Mark.

Leaders and people – all of us – we are called to grow numbers of people, for God's sake. We won't talk of a numbers game, it's a people game – and people count.

by the Rt Rev Garry Marquand [sPanz](#)

Who's got time to read the Bible?

On a typical day my alarm wakes me at 6am; I then endeavor to leave the house early enough to beat the traffic. Once in the office I am immediately immersed in a tightly orchestrated series of emails and meetings that are the lot of an office-based professional. Before I know it the work day is over and I arrive home to precious time with my wife and children. Does this sound familiar? The question I have is: in the midst of this busyness, when does one find time to read the Bible?

Up until recently Bible reading was low on my list of priorities. It would appear that I am not alone. The Bible Society in New Zealand recently undertook some startling research that showed a majority of Christians in New Zealand don't read their Bible on a regular basis. It would seem that reading the Bible regularly is no longer considered an essential practice for the modern Christian.

Why aren't we reading the Bible regularly? I think we need to look beyond the busyness and ask whether we consider Bible reading a priority. If we thought it was important, we would make time for it. So, why isn't it a priority?

The first place to start is the society around us. Christians cannot help but be influenced by the culture they engage with every minute of their active day.

In 1950, 50 percent of primary school students were enrolled in protestant Sunday schools. By 1985 this had decreased to just 11 percent, and today it would be even less. Neither the Church nor Christianity are viewed with the same level of respect as they were just 50 years ago.

Today there is a general suspicion of institutions, a resistance to anyone claiming they know absolute truth, an emphasis on personal experience over facts and the view that reality is whatever you make of it. The only truth, the only authority in today's culture is that which you as an individual choose to believe: if it is true for you, then it must be true.

So in an environment where respect for Christianity has diminished, and where people are suspicious of absolute truth, authority and anything purporting to be an overarching narrative, it is no surprise that the Bible has lost some appeal.

Today's practice of fragmenting the scriptures is also a factor in why reading the Bible has become less of a priority for us. We expose ourselves only to those passages that support our particular point of view or we seek quick scriptural fixes to life's challenges. It can also be seen in churches where reading on Sunday morning is reduced to a few (if any) select verses embedded in a sermon. In selecting only fragments of the Bible we lose the sense of the complete biblical narrative. Without this context the risk is the Bible is ultimately reduced to a collection of clever sayings that compete in a marketplace of self-gratification; hardly the formula for Christian maturity.

And so the classic question to ask is, "What relevance does the Bible have to me?"

In *Will our Children Have Faith?*, J.H. Westerhoff III states, "Unless the story is known, understood, owned, and lived, we and our children will not have Christian faith". Reading the Bible should be central to our practice as Christians. When we read the Bible we are not just undertaking an exercise in learning facts, but engaging in the process of being transformed. The Bible is a venture of the Holy Spirit, both in production (2 Peter 1: 20) and distribution (John 1:14). Transformation takes time. It requires disciplined engagement over an extended period, and can have stunning consequences.

I have recently made the decision to explore the scriptures daily, to position myself to be transformed by God's grace through the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. I recognise that this is now considered counter-cultural and a little radical given the prevailing mood. I invite you to join me and pick up your Bible today and commit yourself to daily Bible reading.

By Mark Brown 

- Mark Brown is a National Director of Scripture Union in New Zealand as well as Chairperson of the Bible Agencies Forum of New Zealand. He attends St Columba Presbyterian Church in Lower Hutt. Scripture Union is undertaking a major campaign in 2006 to counter the alarming trend of Bible disengagement in New Zealand.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Kevin Ward's analysis *Church in a Community of Fragments* (Spanz, Dec 2005) impresses me as having a degree of validity and I hope someone or some Assembly committee will take the initiative to give it due consideration and study. Even if entirely valid and even if it clearly points to the absolute necessity of devising and developing an altogether new missionary strategy, I'm far from certain that will happen. Sadly, there appears to be within our leadership ranks a total absence of will-power to even consider new initiatives.

As Kevin wrote, he was almost certainly conscious of editorial constraints, such as a word limit. Nevertheless, his analysis must be viewed critically. In places, I believe it is flawed.

As early as the 1950s – and according to one of my mentors, as early as the 1930s – our students worshipped in communities and within them worshipping students belonged to sub-communities centred around particular academic, vocational, social, economic and political interests. Artisans worked and worshipped together with professionals and academics in a number of places. The same was true of trades folk, clerical folk and professionals in

different parts of the country in the 1960s and beyond.

None of this, however, detracted from worshipping and working as one body of people in the local communities in which people lived. Considerable efforts were made to see that this did not happen. And the two-car families did not change any of this. The churches did suffer, however, with the advent of sport on Sundays.

To repeat: while Kevin's contribution should be viewed critically, it nevertheless deserves to be taken seriously – if we still have the will to take anything seriously and apply ourselves to our missionary calling with prayer and energy.

Keith Sellar

Dear Editor,

Has the Presbyterian Church become just another service club?

At the last two Presbytery meetings, three churches gave details of the varied programs they run to reach into the community. They ranged from Christmas parties, workshops, teaching programs to coffee mornings.

But no Christian outreach.

A spokesperson for another church who reaches over 1,500 people a year quoted Jesus "go into all the world" but failed to complete the quote "and preach the Gospel" (Mk 6:15). Jesus did not say "go into all the world and have workshops and coffee mornings".

Why is it so difficult for the Church to share its faith? If you attend Rotary, RSA or any secular organisation it is acceptable for them to tell of their achievements and what they represent. However, you have meetings in church buildings and you must never mention Christ, and certainly never ever mention the Gospel; heaven forbid if you try and save some of them. You would be accused of trying to ram religion down their throats and getting them there under false pretenses. Why?

Paul said "I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9: 19,23). Also "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation" (Rom 1:16).

Surely the purpose of outreach is to reach people for Christ? This letter is to encourage Christian outreach to be added to some great programs and so "save some".

Ross Spicer

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Local mission gets a \$142,000 boost

Sixteen local and regional mission projects have benefited from the latest round of Presbyterian Foundation grants.

Parishes from North Shore to Clutha were among the 16 successful applicants that collectively received \$142,000 for projects ranging from a counselling and prayer ministry to support for a music festival.

As in previous years, requests for funding exceeded the amount that was available for distribution, says the Rev John Daniel, National Mission Enabler, who convened the grants committee.

"All applications are judged on their individual merits and according to the funding criteria. Every application had clear missional intent in mind, but it's just not possible to fund all of them. The criteria provide us with some guidelines," says Mr Daniel.

Some applications were not able to be considered because they did not meet the criteria. Future applicants are encouraged to check the funding criteria, which are published on the church's website and on the application material.

Mr Daniel acknowledged the support of the Synod of Otago and Southland, and in particular clerk Heather McKenzie, for her assistance in administering and co-ordinating the application process.

The funds that were distributed came from the Presbyterian Foundation trust fund, which was established by the 1996 General Assembly. There is currently about \$2.5 million of Presbyterian Foundation capital invested in the fund, and about \$140,000 in interest is distributed annually to projects that advance the ongoing regional mission of the Church, or that facilitate the development of innovative local or regional mission opportunities.

One of the 2005 grants went to St Andrew's Community Presbyterian Church in Otahuhu. The Rev Andrew Bell, who co-ordinated the church's application, says they are using the funding to employ a part-time family and children's services co-ordinator.

Co-ordinator Tala Page is already up and running, and Mr Bell says her work will build on the parish's preschool, which re-opened in a brand new building last year, and the existing Mainly Music children's programme (which involves young children developing skills to enhance their early



Funding for the Northern Faith Festival (a music festival) was among the projects that received funding from the Presbyterian Foundation.

education through the use of music, rhythm and rhyme).

Ms Page has two main objectives, explains Mr Bell: firstly, to develop a more innovative Sunday school programme and secondly, to investigate new programmes that will meet the needs of families in the community - for example, holiday programmes, Saturday morning activities, and childcare and parenting seminars. He says the parish is trying to fill a gap in the community by providing programmes that don't exist elsewhere.

"Without the [Presbyterian Foundation] funding we wouldn't be able to even

investigate these things, let alone do anything about implementation," he says.

Student.soul, the Otago University fellowship for campus students, also received a grant. Student.soul has received funding in previous years but this gives no guarantee of receiving funding again. Each year a new application must be made.

Grants for 2006 are likely to be sought mid-year, with applications due in September. Once the specific dates are finalised, they will be publicised through church publications and the Presbyterian website.

By Josephine Reader sPanz

Grant recipients 2005	Presbytery	Purpose
Kids Friendly Project	National	Professional standards training, assessment and resourcing for children/family ministry
Browns Bay-Torbay Parish	North Shore	Families resource/activities centre
St Columba at Botany Parish	Auckland	After school children's programme
St Andrew's Otahuhu Parish	Auckland	Family/children services co-ordinator
Mercury Bay Parish	Waikato	International activities co-ordinator
St Stephen's Hamilton Parish	Waikato	Community/families outreach co-ordinator
Nawton Community Parish	Waikato	Children/families outreach
St Paul's Feilding Parish	Manawatu-Wanganui	Counselling & prayer ministry
Waiareka-Weston Parish	North Otago	Area youth worker
Coastal Unity Parish	Dunedin	Children/family ministry project
East Taieri-Saddle Hill Parish	Dunedin	Christian counselling service
Student.soul	Dunedin	Student outreach
Kaitangata Stirling Lovells Flat Parish	Clutha	Rural ministry community outreach
St David's Palmerston North Parish	Manawatu-Wanganui	Kids Friendly programme
Papakura East and Hunua Parish	South Auckland	Playgroup families co-ordinator
Crossroads Christian Centre	South Auckland	Faith Fest 05 (North)

Reviews

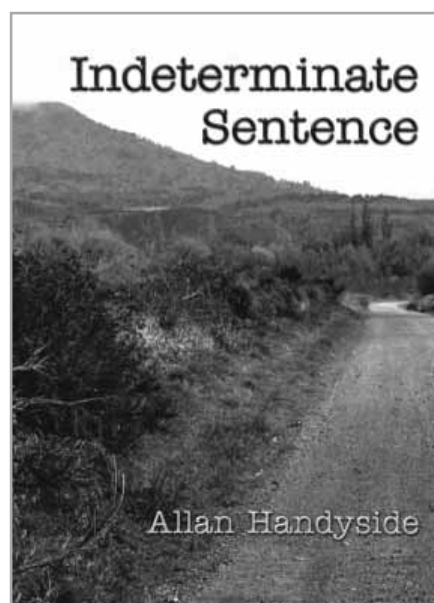
Indeterminate Sentence

by Allan Handyside

Philip Garside Publishing (2005)

Allan Handyside spent World War II in inhumane conditions separated from his family. Not fighting Germans or the Japanese half a world away; he was detained for his pacifist beliefs in Rangipo Prison, near Turangi.

Handyside's is a fascinating story of adherence to an ideal in the face of scorn and considerable pressure to recount and conform.



Along with a number of fellow Methodist pacifists, after refusing to be drafted into military service, he is sent to a detention camp. A refusal to limit the scope of Bible study meetings sends him to Rangipo Prison camp, where he remains until six months after the war ends.

Handyside's journey from normal life to prison detention and finally back to society is overshadowed by his account of others' experiences and by the playing out of a war on the other side of the world. The "conchies" believed that if everyone worldwide refused to participate in the barbarism of war, it would cease. This didn't mean they had anything but repulsion for Hitler and his activities, but that they had faith in humanity's nobler qualities.

Unsurprisingly, this distinction was lost on their peers. Families, particularly wives, had to cope with criticism and even abuse from others whose sons were away fighting.

The often meandering story, with its share of personal letters and quotes from regulations, gives a sense of the author's character and his determined adherence to what he sees as his faith's principles. He will not compromise his stance in the face of considerable pressure, both from parents and prison authorities.

Some proofing errors detract from the flow of the document, which is very much a personal memoir rather than a scholarly history.

Rigorous editing and some reordering of material could have pruned the story back to its essential personal narrative but, as the author's sons say in the foreword: "Our family are publishing this book, not because it will be a best seller, but because it captures a piece of New Zealand history that is not well known."

Reviewed by Amanda Wells

Christ the Lord

by Anne Rice

Random House (2005)

For those unfamiliar with Anne Rice, she is a New Orleans-born, lapsed-Catholic who for the last 30 years has made her name (and fortune) writing books about vampires, witches and the occult in general. So what, may you ask, is she doing writing a fictional account of Jesus' early years?

So let me place my disclaimer at the beginning of this piece – I have long been a fan of her work. Not because I believe in vampires, but because I share her interest in symbols and concepts. Rice uses the concept of vampires as a way for her to explore humankind's relationship with God.

So in a lot of ways, it is not surprising that Rice has turned her attention to what she terms "the ultimate immortal" Jesus Christ. Only this time, instead of him being separated from God through some terrible sin, his separation is caused by him being born into a mortal body - complete with its flaws and limited ability to understand.

The story is told by Jesus himself and covers one year from the time he and his family leave Alexandria. Throughout this time we are introduced to places such as Jerusalem, Nazareth and Sepphoris through this child's eyes. Through Jesus we also see his parents and the strange dynamic that existed between him and his stepbrother James.

One criticism of the story is that of the depiction of Mary. In this book she comes across as a child-like simpleton. I have always thought of Mary as a particularly resilient woman. After all, she was a Maiden of the Temple suddenly pregnant and seeing angels. This would have taken an awesome amount of mental strength to deal with.

One of the strengths of this book, and of any book by Rice, is her attention to detail. Rice has meticulously researched the period to create an authentic world for Jesus and his family to reside in.

However, the standout strength of the book is Rice's desire to know Jesus both as the Son of God and as a human in his time on Earth. She dares to ask what, on the surface, are quite simple questions, but which are theologically important all the same. Such as, did he know that he was God incarnate? And if he did know, how did he relate his experiences as a human to his status as creator of all? The natural conclusion of this line of questioning being "What was he trying to achieve?"

In short, Rice is prepared to commit not only her mind and soul but also her heart to trying to unravel the mystery that Jesus' life and experiences present to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Reviewed by Juliette Bowater

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The places Assembly staff have called home

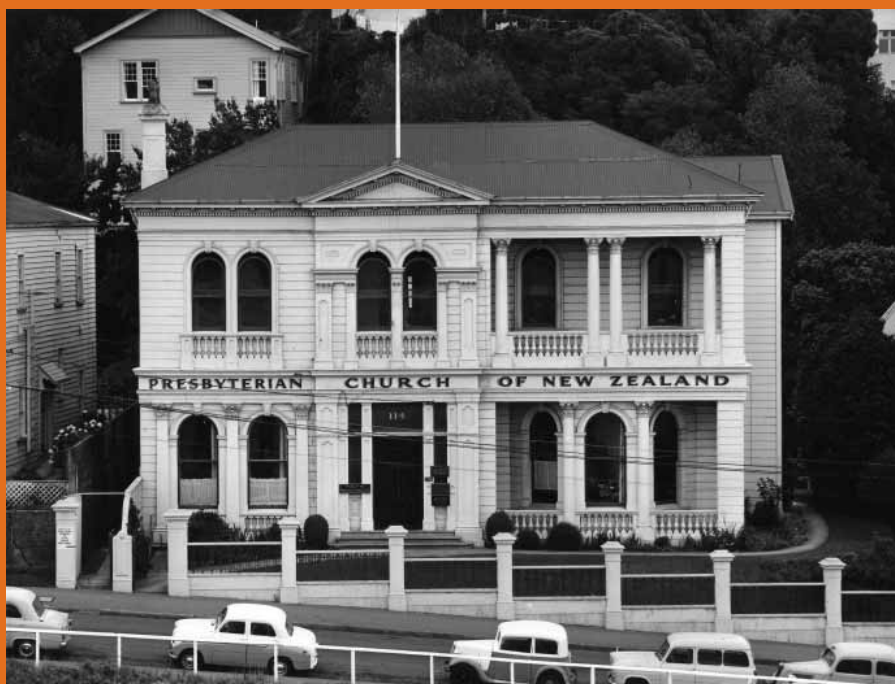
Over the past 100 years the Presbyterian Church offices have been located in two small rented rooms, a grand stately home, a “prestigious” fifteen storey office block, and a converted three storey warehouse.

Wellington was home to the first Church offices, which were provided for the newly created position of general treasurer in 1906. The offices comprised two rented rooms and a strong room located on Lambton Quay next to the Bank of New Zealand. One clerical worker supported the general treasurer and the Assembly clerk, but as the General Assembly introduced new projects and the various funds of the Northern and Southern churches amalgamated, a steady increase in administrative functions and financial outlay became apparent. By 1920 the General Treasurer expressed his concern at the cramped environment in which he and his staff were expected to carry out their duties.

Although tension existed among Church members over the increase in administrative functions and accompanying financial outlay, support existed to develop a larger central office. One correspondent noted that the “small rented rooms were no credit to the Presbyterian Church nor were they adequate”. He believed that the offices should be housed in “something more in accord with the dignity and mana of the Presbyterian Church and more conducive to the comfort, health and convenience of the splendid staff”.

In 1926 the Church Property Trustees informed the General Assembly that a new building had been purchased for £9000 (pictured). It was several doors up from St Andrew’s on The Terrace, and was an impressive home, built in 1884 of “heart totara with internal fittings of polished cedar and a grand staircase”. The previous owner, Miss Malcolm, had converted it into a “superior boarding house favoured by members of Parliament”.

The Church offices initially occupied three rooms on the ground floor. An attached flat was set aside for a caretaker, the YMCA, several doctors, and the Bible



The offices at 114 The Terrace (pictured here) served as an important centre for the Church for forty years, and the prominent building was important in helping to develop a sense of national identity during that period.

Society rented the other space. The Church Property Trustees assured Assembly that the Church would benefit “considerably through owning its own property” and that the building would always pay for itself. Over the next 43 years, the Church’s offices gradually occupied a greater space and 114 The Terrace played a significant role in the Church’s sense of national identity.

By 1960 the site had become prime real estate and offered the possibilities for future re-investment by the Church Property Trustees. To the chagrin of many, the demolition of the stately home took place towards the end of 1967 to make way for a fifteen storey office block. *Outlook*, the Church’s national publication at the time, informed its readers that the new construction was in no way “a sign of Presbyterian wealth”. The building, to be known as Dalmuir House, the writer assured the readers, was “an appropriate way to utilise assets and make a valuable contribution to the commercial life of the capital city”.

Within 20 years the financial climate shifted once more, and in 1987 the Church Property Trustees deemed it best to sell Dalmuir House. The offices moved into temporary accommodation in Molesworth Street while other options were explored. The present building, Laughton House, purchased in 1989, continued to provide a central point of focus for Presbyterians. However, with the administrative downsizing of recent years and continuing financial pressures the Church offices will once more be relocated and this time into space similar to that of 100 years ago.

By Yvonne Wilkie, Archivist [sPanz](#)

- Editor - *At the time of printing, the search for new Assembly offices was underway following the sale of Laughton House in 2005, but no location had been confirmed.*

Safety first, please

Parishes will find it easier to keep people safe, thanks to a new resource that takes the hard work out of establishing and maintaining a health and safety system.

Keeping people safe from physical harm while they are visiting or working on church property may sound easy, but it is estimated that less than half of Presbyterian and Uniting parishes have processes in place to identify and monitor potential hazards.

Former Human Resource Manager, Fiona Stenhouse, who co-ordinated the project before her departure in February, acknowledges St Columba at Botany Downs' assistance with this project – their in-house manual was used as the basis of the resource that will be made available to all parishes.

An accident can happen at any parish any time, and the risk of not doing anything to identify and eliminate hazards is significant, she says.

"Not only can people be seriously hurt, but there can be a financial cost to the parish if a prosecution results from an accident," explains Mrs Stenhouse.

A parishioner or visitor slipping and hurting him or herself on a poorly maintained, slippery path could result in prosecution for the parish under the Health and Safety and Employment Act if an investigation showed that the parish did nothing to eliminate the hazard – in this case the slippery path.

Assembly Executive Secretary the Rev Dr Kerry Enright believes we should be leading the way in providing safe environments because as a Church it is important to demonstrate our care for others. "Love thy neighbour as yourself," he says, "Our calling is to love, and a fundamental part of this is safety."

The resource that has been developed will be posted to all parishes over the next few months. It includes a draft policy document, checklists, forms and everything else that a parish needs to establish and maintain its own health and safety system.

One of the things the resource does is help churches identify potential hazards in their buildings and parish grounds. Potential ways for the hazards to be minimised or eliminated are also suggested.

Graeme Owen of Securo, the organisation that the Church commissioned to develop



The new resource helps parish leaders keep the people visiting our churches safe from physical harm by providing all the tools needed to set up a health and safety system.

the resource and provide back-up support for parishes, says it is easy to use and has plenty of scope for customisation.

In addition to the manual, parishes can purchase additional specialist support to help get the system up and running. Securo, a nationwide health and safety organisation, has been engaged to provide this support, which includes an 0800

support line and regular visits from an experienced safety consultant. Parishes will also receive information about these services and associated costs in due course.

Mrs Stenhouse describes the system as "user-friendly, accurate and easy to use" because it was developed with parishes in mind, which means that the forms and other materials are targeted to parish needs.



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150 years of Presbyterianism in Christchurch

The Presbyterian Church began in the Christchurch region with the building of St Andrew's "Scotch" Church and the calling of the Rev Charles Fraser to be its minister in 1856.

Each fifty years since then, St Andrew's has celebrated a jubilee and published a book about the previous fifty years. Mrs Jane Deans wrote the story of the first fifty years. She was the widow of John Deans who put £10 on the table at the 1854 meeting that decided to build the church. He promised a further £90 when the building was completed but it was Jane, by then a widow, who fulfilled the promise.

The centennial history was written in 1956 by Graham Miller, the then session clerk of St Andrew's, and the most recent book was written by Prof David McIntyre and published at the start of celebrations in February 2006.

Because this jubilee also marks the 150

years of the Presbyterian Church in the region, the Christchurch Presbytery shared in two of the Waitangi weekend celebrations.

The first of these was the dedication of a memorial by Presbytery moderator, the Rev Kim Bathgate on the original site of St Andrew's. The memorial, a metal sculpture symbolising the Scottish presence in the city, is mounted on the cairn and light standard that was placed at the front entrance of the church in the early 1900s. Since the church building shifted to the grounds of Rangi Ruru Girls' School in 1986, the cairn and light has stood in lonely isolation on an unused part of the property. As the bearer of the memorial it is now given a much more public position near busy Oxford Terrace.

The second shared activity – an anniversary service in the expanded original church – remembered the beginning of what was a very rapid expansion of Presbyterian



St Andrew's at its original location.

churches and schools in a fast growing province.

Now called St Andrew's at Rangi Ruru, the church serves as a chapel for the school as well as retaining its original parish function. Use of the church is shared by the school chaplain and the ministry team that serves both the parish of St Andrew's at Rangi Ruru and the parish of St James, Spreydon.

The Rt Rev Garry Marquand, moderator of the General Assembly preached at the anniversary service, which was followed by a luncheon. Around 200 people attended the sesqui-centenary celebrations, which were held 3-5 February. sPanz



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The Hawea singstars

For the first time in many years the white-washed and timbered walls of the beautiful old Hawea Presbyterian Church reverberated with the sound of children's voices.

Singing, dancing, playing – it's a long time since that was seen in the church. But when, with the help of a grant from the Synod of Otago and Southland, the Upper Clutha Presbyterian Parish appointed Liz Maluschnig as mission initiatives and

project manager last year, things began to change.

With a brief to establish a ministry among the many young families in the Hawea Flat area, Liz gathered a team to help her start a Mainly Music group. Dozens of mums and toddlers, virtually none of whom had any links with local churches, came to enjoy the weekly sessions in the church. Builders repairing the roof remarked on the happy sounds coming from inside the buildings and were invited to come in for a muffin at morning tea.

Soon the four year olds at the nearby play-centre also started coming to the church for a special music session just for them.


Tarras, a village at the foot of the Lindis Pass and the remotest part of the Upper Clutha Parish, was home to a number of young families as well. For their preschoolers, Liz and her music team established a fortnightly music and movement programme.

Hoping to encourage some of the families she was now in contact with to come to church, Liz and a local mother of three, Kim Jongsma, invited some of the primary school age children to make up a choir to sing at Hawea's bi-weekly service.

Ten to twelve enthusiastic young singers, with their families in tow, reported an hour before the next service and practised some simple action songs. Their effort was enthusiastically received by both parents and church regulars and the following month they were on the job again. Parents stayed on for the service while the children went to the back room for activities led by Kirsten Jongsma.

The Hawea Singstars, as they chose to call themselves, took part also in the special Christmas Eve service which was attended by their families and are enthusiastically looking forward to more of the same this year!

Church attendance is, of course, up significantly!

By Bartha Hill 



The Hawea Singstars in action. Pictured clockwise from back left: Kirsten Jongsma, Taylor Jongsma, Mitchie Maluschnig, Ella Maluschnig, Ella Moore.



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Snapshots



ABOVE:
These choristers from St Andrew's Howick Presbyterian Church are pictured at last year's gathering of Chinese combined choirs. The annual event is hosted by St David's Presbyterian Church in Khyber Pass and was attended by around 800 people.



LEFT:
Over 250 people attended the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Hutt City Uniting Congregations in late November 2005. Formed from Methodist and Presbyterian parishes, the parish has seven congregations today. The celebration service held at Waiwhetu Uniting Church was led by the parish's ministry team and included contributions from young people, and a Tongan and Samoan choir.

RIGHT:
A service attended by around 240 church members and visitors marked the official opening of Kapiti Uniting Parish's newly refurbished church hall. Before the ribbon was cut, the congregation surrounded the hall holding hands.



If your Parish has a contribution for this page, send the photo and caption to Spanz, PO Box 9049, Wellington.

Valuing Volunteers

Luamanuvao Winnie Laban put her hand up for the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector job following Labour's 2005 General Election win.

Describing why she volunteered for this portfolio and Associate Minister portfolios for Economic Development, Social Development, and Employment and Pacific Affairs, she says "they encapsulate the values that drive me".

Mrs Laban credits being brought up in a Presbyterian family for her values system and her "huge commitment to people who are marginalised". Ordained as an elder at 19 years old, she pays tribute to those within the Church who taught her a lot as a young person and says the church has been an integral part of her life.

Mrs Laban describes the voluntary sector – or civil society as she calls it – as the "guilty conscience" of the state and private sectors.

"It's about a relationship that is interconnected. And I think it's a very important one because it keeps everyone honest. No one [sector] can exist without the other," says Mrs Laban.

With about one million New Zealanders estimated to be involved in volunteering in some way, the positive impact on social development, the economy and the environment is significant, she says.

"Imagine life without ambulance drivers, surf lifesavers, or sports coaches. New Zealand would be a very different place."

While a lack of information makes it difficult to quantify the exact contribution of the sector in economic terms, the Department of Conservation estimates that it uses around \$1.8 million of voluntary labour annually. Similarly, a report commissioned by the New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations surveyed 10 major social service organisations and estimated that the workers, managers and board members contributed around 7.5 million hours to those organisations in 2002. This work had an estimated value of \$126 million.



Hon Luamanuvao Winnie Laban pictured during a visit to the Paekakariki Te Kohanga Reo last year.

According to the briefing received by Mrs Laban when she took office last year, the lack of comprehensive data about the sector makes it difficult to make effective decisions and to allocate resources where they would be most useful.

Addressing this lack of information is one of Mrs Laban's first priorities. She has commissioned some work to identify the grants to community organisations from government and private sources.

"We're trying to get a picture of what is in place at this time. Secondly, whether the grants are really meeting the targets in a co-ordinated way so that the groups that really need it, and are working effectively, are actually receiving it."

A 2002 Philanthropy New Zealand report conservatively estimates that community and voluntary organisations receive \$1.7 billion per annum from private funders, central and local government and trusts. Ensuring that these funds are meeting community needs is a priority for Mrs Laban during her term as Minister.

Supporting the strengthening of the sector, so that it starts working more collaboratively, including building relationships between government and the civil society sector, will also be important, she says.

Advocacy and resource development are other priorities. In partnership with New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations and community law centres, Mrs Laban recently launched a legal resource that will assist community organisations to understand their legal rights and responsibilities. One of the strengths of the resource is that organisations worked in collaboration to produce it, she explains.

"It's getting all the different groups to start working with each other on outcomes like this."

Mrs Laban says the sector is about "citizens and their participation in decision-making. It's about what makes good communities and looks after the well-being of communities."

By Josephine Reader **sPanz**

Darfur:

the forgotten cause

It may have slipped from world headlines, but for over 2 million people in Darfur, Western Sudan, the crisis is far from over. Increasing violence and slashed international aid funding means they face a grim future. The needs of those affected by the Pakistan earthquake, Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami have tended to eclipse the suffering of people in Darfur. Yet fighting in the province continues and the Sudanese government has proved unwilling to stop the attacks.

Through ACT International, Christian World Service partners are operating one of the biggest emergency-relief operations in Darfur, but are concerned this will have to be scaled back. As more people are left homeless, ACT is working hard to meet their needs, provide food and water and help children in particular adjust to long-term life in camps for displaced persons.

Darfur has a long history of confrontations between nomadic Arabs and settled African farmers. In 2003, there was a marked increase in clashes between the Government of Sudan and resistance militias. Government-backed militias (the camel riding Janjaweed) swooped through civilian villages, burning houses and crops, destroying water supplies and household goods, raping women and abducting and murdering as they went. Over 2 million people have been forced from their homes, seeking refuge in west Darfur where aid agencies have set up camps to assist them.

Although the level of conflict reduced somewhat in 2005, the level of insecurity remains high. People cannot return to their villages for fear of their safety. Most have nothing to return to anyway. Leaving the camp to collect firewood for cooking leaves women vulnerable to rape and many men have been murdered. Since December 2005, there has been an increase in violence, especially around some camps, leaving people more vulnerable and in greater need of humanitarian aid.

CWS is supporting the work of ACT International - Caritas in Darfur. This is a joint relief effort on behalf of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches worldwide. Working with Sudanese partners, over the last year the programme has:

- provided more than 254,000 people with water cans, cooking utensils, mosquito nets, blankets and sleeping mats
- constructed 4,000 shelters and built 20 schools
- drilled 80 boreholes and built 22 wells and set up 52 hand pumps
- provided supplementary feeding for more than 37,668 malnourished children and new mothers.

ACT International has also focused on providing health care and promoting hygiene, trauma counselling and protection, such as developing fuel efficient stoves so women do not have to leave the camps for firewood as often. CWS continues to accept donations: www.cws.org.nz / phone 0800 74 73 72.


By Liz Martyn 

Photo credit: CWS/ACT - Caritas

A young girl sits amid her family's possessions after they fled attacks by armed militias.

Beginners' guide to General Assembly

For all of you who've heard about Assembly but aren't really sure what it's all about or what it means for congregations, this report is for you.

General Assembly is the opportunity for church elders and ministers to have input into the future direction of the Church. This function characterises one of the things that makes the Presbyterian Church distinct from other denominations: our tradition of participatory decision-making at all levels.

General Assembly meets to honour God by inspiring and equipping people, to foster national connectedness and belonging and for the purpose of governing the Church. It is the highest governing body of the Church.

Presbyteries appoint commissioners to Assembly, and every parish is entitled to send a commissioner. The commissioners discuss and vote on recommendations and proposals that are brought to Assembly. Typically, about 500 people gather at Assembly, which is held once every

two years at different locations around New Zealand.

One of the General Assembly committees, Council of Assembly, has a major responsibility for implementing General Assembly decisions. Over the next few months, Council and its task groups and sub-committees will be seeking input from the wider church on many matters, including a proposed new Book of Order and sub-ordinate standard; a review of the stipend; and a review of Assembly Assessment. Feedback from presbyteries and congregations is expected to shape the final recommendations that will be put to General Assembly 2006.

GA06 will be a little different from previous gatherings, because it will be shorter in duration than has historically been the case, and there is also expected to be a trial of consensus-style decision-making for some parts of the meeting (more information about this will be forthcoming during the next few months).

The 2004 Assembly highlighted various reasons why people were not able to attend the gathering, including cost, meeting length and mode, so a task group was established to complete a review and make recommendations for improving the Assembly meeting. Some of their recommendations have already been implemented (such as the shorter meeting duration), and GA06 will consider any policy and regulation changes that may result from the task group's other recommendations. sPanz



The Rev Pamela Tankersley (pictured) is the Moderator-designate and will be installed as the new Moderator of the General Assembly on the first day of GA06.

New Video

listen, learn and live
CWS partner, the Church of Uganda, meets the challenge of HIV/AIDS

Available with study material from March 1st

Contact CWS, stating when you would like to borrow the video and an alternate date



CWS

CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE
PO Box 22652, Christchurch
0800 74 73 72 cws@cws.org.nz

General Assembly 2006

WHEN:

Thursday, 28 September –
Monday, 2 October 2006

WHERE:

St Cuthbert's School,
Epsom, Auckland

THEME:

Christ-centred, community-facing

Check out www.presbyterian.org.nz/ga06 for up-to-date information.



Presbyterian Support

UPPER SOUTH ISLAND

Social worker for kindy kids

In what is believed to be a New Zealand first, Victory Square Kindergarten in Nelson is offering the services of a part-time social worker, Sue Billingham of Presbyterian Support's Family Works, who also works in two primary schools in the district.

The kindergarten programme, called Children First, is a joint initiative between St Andrew's Family Trust, Presbyterian Support and the Nelson Kindergarten Association. Victory Square Kindergarten is situated in the lowest socio-economic area in Nelson district. Sue works there once a week. "The focus of my work is working with parents to help them develop parenting strategies for dealing with things like tantrums, bedtime routines and challenging behaviour, or giving advice on childcare, healthy eating or play activities," Sue says. "Once a relationship has built up, parents often talk to me about other

problems. I certainly don't have the answers to all of their issues, but by working in the community I am usually able to liaise with other agencies who have the specialised knowledge, and can refer the family to them."

Head teacher Judy Miles says that even after a few weeks staff noticed that parents and caregivers felt comfortable to chat to Sue and ask for advice.

Sue also works at Nelson Central School, which has about 400 pupils, and Auckland Point School, with about 120 pupils. "I believe that by working in schools, I am able to provide an early intervention service that is accessible and non-threatening to families/whanau," she says

Sue is one of a team of community and school-based social workers employed by Family Works Upper South Island to provide a variety of preventive social work services.



Photo Credit: Nelson Mail

► Sue Billingham at work at Victory Square Kindergarten.

They are based in a total of 12 schools and one kindergarten located from mid-Canterbury to Nelson and Blenheim. Between them, they provided support to about 400 families in the last financial year.

Working to prevent abuse to the elderly

SOUTH CANTERBURY

South Canterbury has its share of abuse of the older person. Elder abuse occurs when a person aged 65 or more experiences harmful physical, psychological, sexual, material or social effects caused by the behaviour of another person with whom they have a relationship implying trust.

In South Canterbury the Elder Protection Service coordinator, Geeta Muralidharan (pictured) is available through Family Works at Presbyterian Support. People in the community such as family members, and health professionals are encouraged to contact her when abuse or neglect of older persons is suspected. Once an initial assessment of the situation is made other services may be called in for additional support. Geeta works closely with organisations such as Age Concern, Senior Citizens, Community Police, WINZ to ensure that interventions to protect the older person are long-lasting.

Financial abuse, including abuse of Enduring Power of Attorney is a concern locally, with psychological abuse often a factor in cases reported to the service. With families involved, many older people are reluctant to take any action for fear they will lose contact with the family member, or aggravate the situation and put themselves at risk. Sometimes the abuse is unintentional as family members want to help the parent manage their affairs.

It is important to ensure that the older person is fully aware of any actions that may impact on them.

The Elder Protection Service is a free and confidential Government-funded service and provides advice, advocacy, assessment, and coordination of services from other agencies where required. Geeta is available to speak to groups about the Elder Protection role and what it can offer in the community. She



► Geeta Muralidharan

is also available for organisations working with older people to assist with staff training or for issues related to elder abuse and neglect prevention.

She can be contacted at Family Works on 03 688 1748.



so much friendship



Relationships are key to helping a young generation come to know God. Our volunteer leaders and staff seek ongoing, meaningful friendships with children and young people that really make a difference.

Mark Brown - National Director

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