

# Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

DECEMBER 2009, ISSUE 41



Ready  
for  
retirement?

[www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz)

# Challenging today's violent society

**It is commonplace these days to hear in the media about violence within our families, on our streets and in our village communities. Our evening TV viewing is often bombarded by campaigns and slogans condemning abusive behaviour of any type. Radio talkback shows have become overcrowded by finger-pointers, do-gooders and those who really do care having their say on the latest violent attack. And many of us have witnessed first-hand relatives, friends and those affected by violence coming out in numbers to support their fellow human beings. One can't say that we are not made aware that violence is a problem. Despite this, the list of serious assaults reported has grown. What could be going so wrong?**

**The vicious and damaging nature of an assault inflicted by one human being onto a fellow human being is just something that is hard to comprehend. The most fundamental lessons we're taught growing up are people-centred and based around the same values that are heard time after time; love, respect, kindness, and compassion.**

A violent outburst is often an emotional reaction to the environment (for example: family pressures, work, lifestyle changes and expectations) or an outlet to an internalised struggle (cycles of family violence, esteem issues or even depression). It seems that in today's society, we are behaving more and more as individuals, sidestepping our social and moral responsibilities and the value that family connectedness brings to life. In some cases it is almost as though our *fa'a-Samoa* is giving refuge to our behaviour running wild.

When we are less able to cope successfully with modern day life, then we have a problem. A major problem. We cannot

isolate or disengage ourselves from families and reality. We need to talk to someone who is willing to listen to us. Perhaps someone who understands us and who would "cry a river" for us (Fiu, Ta'afuli Andrew 2006). Because we need to be heard. We need to be connected to reality and to each other. Right now we seem to be running around like headless chooks not knowing who to turn to for help.

It is not enough to put the blame on, for example, outside influences, Western cultures, peers, too much television exposure, movies and other technological media of today. Nor can we point the finger at journalists for reporting such cowardly acts, nor publishers for printing them on the front pages.

Instead we should really be looking at ourselves and our own environment/*si'osi'omaga* for answers, and look at ways we can influence and create new ways of being and living together. Do we need to put pressure on parents who may have fallen short of being caring parents? Maybe we should. Do we need to challenge the churches for concentrating on spirituality and not the whole person? Maybe! Ask the educationists why they are not targeting the real needs of our next generation? Maybe! Is our *fa'a-Samoa* standing in the way of us speaking out? Should we continue to hide behind sayings such as, "E lē a'oa'ia e Laupua Tamafaiga" (it is neither my place nor my right to advise you – Hon Misa Telefoni 2005). Whilst it may seem easier to adapt to cultural changes globally, the impact on the individual is a different matter altogether. We need to develop alternatives to doing nothing at all.

One such option may be an integrated approach within a collaborative grouping of churches and village councils. The framework will be well resourced by those who will have the influence and those with a common goal, shared interests and with the right skills. We need to be committed to ensuring all interested parties are on board,



Tuiavi'i Simi Tuiavi'i

talking the same language openly and honestly and walking the shared pathway.

Above all else, we should aim at changing our mindset as individuals. And once we take that step, why not aim to lift a finger to reach out to someone else in need? When we change our thinking, attitude, approach and behaviour not only will our own lifestyle change – our whole communities' lifestyle will change.

Soifua

*Tuiavi'i Simi Tuiavi'i is an elder and a member of the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church at Cannons Creek, Porirua. He is the manager of a Pacific organisation that provides mental health residential rehabilitation services to all New Zealanders, and sits on the Board of Tumai mo te Iwi, a locally based mainstream Primary Health Organisation.*



# Spanz

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## Who we are

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The Right Rev Dr Graham Redding contributes a regular column to *Spanz*

## Moderator's Musings

**It has been most encouraging to see the generous response from New Zealanders to October's Pacific tsunami. I was honoured to represent the Presbyterian Church at a memorial service for tsunami victims at the Waitakere stadium in West Auckland. Numerous community and church fundraising events have been held around the country. Many people and congregations have supported Christian World Service and other emergency appeals. Our prayers continue for the families and communities affected by the tsunami.**

Interestingly, around the time of the tsunami, the book of Job featured in the weekly lectionary readings.

Probably more than any other book in the Bible, this remarkable story focuses the mind on the question of how we might interpret the suffering of the innocent.

Job's friends present him with a variety of interpretations, including the possibility that suffering is the means by which Job is being punished, corrected and humbled by God. Job not only refutes these arguments; he calls God to account, protesting as he does so that there is no end to injustice in a world where evil people seem to prosper and good people suffer without cause.

As far as Job's friends are concerned, Job's protest is blasphemous. How dare Job question God's wisdom and justice? If he truly was a person of faith, he would look within himself for the cause of his plight.

After the friends' arguments have run their course, God finally speaks. As God's sovereignty is asserted, Job is simultaneously chastised, humbled and vindicated; his so-called friends are humiliated and punished. By the end of God's speech, it is notable that many of Job's questions have not been answered, but that does not matter, for he has been addressed personally by the living God. His protest has been heard; his trust in God has been renewed, and he repents.

When we place the book of Job alongside the New Testament witness to Christ, we find the notion of God's sovereignty



Neil Mackenzie

being extended. It is now located not in the inscrutable will of God but in the resolve of a God who comes alongside us, enters our suffering, plumbs the depths of our alienation and draws us into the resurrection life. It is located in God's love.

This is the remarkable Good News by which we live, and which we celebrate afresh each Advent and Christmas season. It enables us to joyfully and defiantly celebrate life in the midst of death, to give voice to hope in the midst of despair and to detect signs of goodness in the midst of chaos. How does St John put it in Revelation 21? "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

May the One whose birth we celebrate this Christmas draw each of us more fully into His grace and truth.



# Superannuation primes generational time bomb

**A** superannuation crisis is looming and Retirement Commissioner Diana Crossan is disappointed that successive governments have ignored her repeated warnings. ANGELA SINGER talks to Presbyterians who have retired or are nearing retirement about how they are coping and their fears for their children.



**The Retirement Commissioner has not been alone in her call for Government to take action. Economic pundits and retirement policy experts say that planners have underestimated life expectancy and the consequent rise in the cost of superannuation, and that the National Government's 11-year suspension of contributions to the New Zealand Superannuation Fund (also known as the Cullen Fund) will result in the baby-boomer generation failing to pay for a significant portion of the future cost of its own superannuation, unfairly placing the burden on the generation that follows.**

To avert the crisis, Diana Crossan has suggested increasing the age of superannuation entitlement by one or two years, following the lead of Australia and Germany, although New Zealand governments past and present have rejected this idea. Other options include means testing, raising taxes, cutting the rate of superannuation, improving the nation's productivity and cutting government spending. However, discussion about New Zealanders' preferred options needs to start soon, as time is running out.

"We need to be talking now about how we are going to meet these costs," Diana Crossan says. "An aging population is going to need more support from a shrinking working population. Both major political parties have said they won't alter New Zealand Superannuation."

Treasury recently released a statement on New Zealand's long-term fiscal position. Diana Crossan says the Treasury update gives scenarios of how New Zealand Superannuation can be afforded in the future, but "no one is recommending any particular change at this point. We have some possible options that need careful consideration".

In less than two years, the Baby Boomer generation will move into the 65-plus age group in large numbers, hitting a retirement-age peak from 2021 to 2031. Statistics New Zealand figures show that half a million New Zealanders are currently over 65, with this estimated to rise to one in four New Zealanders by 2051.

In October, Church leaders met with the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to express their concern that older people might be living in poverty if future generations can't meet the costs of pensions. The Church leaders, including Presbyterian Moderator the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding, requested that the Government reinstate automatic contributions to the New Zealand Superannuation Fund as soon as possible, preferably in the next financial year.

The Church leaders reminded the Government that most older New Zealanders rely heavily on NZ Superannuation. A recent study showed that nearly half lived on NZ Superannuation plus \$5000 or less per annum before tax, and at least one third had no assets except the family home.

Many within the Church were raised during a time when people were encouraged to safeguard their financial future by investing in property or owning their own home, and subsequently the rate of home ownership for those aged over 65 is high. For those who chose not to invest in property, and have no savings, retirement is proving to be a far from relaxing time.

Presbyterian-church goes Maureen, 81, and John, 84, chose not to buy their own home and they are finding living on a limited

income very difficult. "We just can't make ends meet and we are always in the red." The Dunedin-based superannuitants say they are living on their credit card "not by choice, we are short at least \$100 every week".

The couple rent a two bedroom flat for \$250 per week; they have no investments and live entirely on the married pension of \$478.38 per week. Their rent and their ill health qualify them for an accommodation supplement and a disability allowance, bringing their total income from Work and Income up to \$630 a week. "We divide this into rent, power, phone, insurances, petrol and car upkeep, food, credit card payment, hearing-aid batteries, lawn mowing, doctors' visits and medicines but it doesn't stretch. Our medical costs and rent keep rising so the allowances we receive don't cover them. As we're always short, there's no money for anything but the basics, we don't go out much, only to the church free movie night". Maureen adds that they have cut back on the size of meals and use of their heater, "but what more can we do; we can't get rid of the car or the phone because we need them for the doctor".

John says the situation is stressful and he gets down, however he will not share their financial worries with friends: "we're not whiners, there are people worse off, we lived through the Depression and rationing so know how to make a little go far". The couple's adult children are not in a position to assist as "the recession is making things unstable for them".

The couple says in retrospect they should have saved for their retirement although this would have been difficult during the 1970s as they worked part-time for aid organisations. They both agree that as they approached retirement, the level of superannuation "was a liveable income so there didn't seem to be reason for concern. You didn't hear of older folks struggling then". In 1978, the net rate of National Superannuation for a couple was over 89 percent of net after-tax wages; this was reduced in 1979 to 80 percent. Currently NZ Superannuation is fixed at 66 percent of the net average wage. John and Maureen are sure that NZ Superannuation will reduce, perhaps even cease "when the pot runs dry". "We've told our children 'don't rely on Super to be there for you and don't expect to live on it'."

Former convenor of the Council of Assembly the Rev Rhys Pearson is also not convinced that the rate of NZ Superannuation will remain stable. An accountant before he went into ministry, Rhys is a champion of planning for retirement. "As retirement approaches, you have to think a few years ahead to possible large expenses. I knew we wouldn't be able to afford a new car on the pension so we replaced our car prior."

Rhys retired from ministry last year and is finding that financially he and wife Bev are "doing okay" on a combination of NZ Superannuation and the Church Beneficiary Fund pension but that there is no money left for luxuries. "It's enough," says Rhys, "if we don't want to do anything such as go on overseas trips". Bev adds that if they want to go see a show like they used to, they would have to save for it.

Even though they have a debt-free house and used the Beneficiary Fund payout to renovate, Rhys says yearly rates of \$3000 take a toll. Bev says if they still had a mortgage, things would be difficult because they already live carefully. "Because both our parents were raised during the Depression, we were brought up to save and live



with less. We don't drink, smoke, bet on the races, we don't buy Lotto. We have a veggie garden and we live frugally", says Rhys.

If the next Government were to reduce NZ Superannuation payments, Rhys and Bev agree that they would have to consider downsizing their home and moving to an area where rates are cheaper or looking for part-time work. "I don't want to be forced to work", says Rhys. "Being a minister is stressful; after all these years it leaves you tired. I was ill last year and I expect it will take several years before I get my energy back so, no, I do not want to go fruit picking but if we had to we would".

Rhys says that because Bev isn't of retirement age, she piggybacks on his NZ Superannuation, receiving a reduced amount. "It means that we can't earn more than \$80 a week without getting financially penalised, so we aren't encouraged to earn even though it would help. It's ridiculous really."

Ill health ruled out the option of part-time work for retired Presbyterian minister Peter, 70, and his wife, 66. They live entirely on NZ Superannuation, a situation Peter describes as "just impossible". Peter can't imagine trying to pay a market rent on NZ Superannuation and is grateful that "we were wise enough when I received an ACC payment to use it as a deposit on a home".

Peter spent most of his life undertaking semi-voluntary work, "so we knew at retirement things would be tight; my wife was our main bread winner".

For extra retirement income, they bought rental properties in the late 1980s; the rentals are not as profitable as they hoped. "They aren't viable because we could only afford to buy older properties that need ongoing maintenance; we have to extend our bank arrangements to cover repairs." Should there be a reduction in NZ

Superannuation, Peter says maintenance on the rental properties would be delayed "but in the long run, deteriorating property is not in our interests".

Peter worries that in the future there will be no NZ Superannuation for their children and he is unsure how much they will be able to assist them financially. "They are all in employment and paying off their own homes but they have no buffer for life's unexpected changes. We hope we will be able to transfer some of our assets to them."

Peter says he knows of families that would be in dire circumstances if NZ Superannuation was reduced. "It would create a social crisis. If the age for super was raised, it would be unfair; at 65 many are still healthy and can work but that was not my experience. What will happen to those unable to work, will it be like the Depression?"

The Depression invokes outright poverty but for Church elder and lay preacher Linley Kennett, being born in 1934 was the making of her. "I'm really thankful I was born in the Depression, and I'm thankful my parents were also born into a depression because we were all raised to save. For every sixpence I got, one penny went into my money box".

Today Linley, a great-grandmother, is retired, has her own home and describes her financial situation as "comfortable", living on a combination of NZ Superannuation, interest from her savings and part-time employment.

Recently widowed, Linley has had to adjust to having just one income; "fortunately I receive a living-alone payment because interest on my savings is half what it was last year". If there is something she wants to buy to make her life a bit more comfortable, Linley says that she saves for it because she does not want to dip into her capital.

Whether or not there will be NZ Superannuation for her children is not something that Linley dwells on. "My children are grown up now and I raised them to save; if they choose not to that's really their choice, they have to do it for themselves."

Linley is sympathetic to the pressure people are under nowadays to spend. "In my day we never had all these ads telling us to have everything yesterday, interest free this and that, we weren't told we had to have the latest clothes; we just made do."

To reduce expenses, Linley tries not to buy vegetables, eating instead from her own veggie garden, following the example of her parents and grandparents. "You don't even need a garden; vegetables can be grown in buckets. To be more environmentally friendly, I bought a large wallpaper paste tank to collect rain water and save on water usage."

If NZ Superannuation was reduced, Linley says she would feel it, "I might have to talk seriously with my family about something like joining together in a big family home".

of a heater because they couldn't afford to heat their whole home. They barely moved and that's not good for their health. People are finding their house rates have increased unexpectedly and in stretching their finances to meet the increase, their other bills are getting on top of them."

Property ownership, or more the lack of it, is an issue for some ministers, Ray says. Ministers who have lived in the church manse most of their lives are thinking of creative solutions. "I know of a couple of ministers who don't have their own home or crib who are considering if it might be possible to live communally with two families sharing one house."

When he retires Ray says he will experience a significant drop in income but he expects his rental property to provide a cushion. "I'm not stressed about retirement; I trust in God for the future."

# IN 2051, one in four New Zealanders will be over 65

A reduction in NZ Superannuation would mean Presbyterian church-goer Helen would have to give up one of her modest treats; Helen and her husband can afford to have lunch in a café once-a-fortnight but only if she is very careful with her grocery budget.

"We are just managing a fairly minimal standard of living on Super with additional income provided by hubby's pension from his time as a school teacher". Helen adds that much of her husband's pension was used to buy their house. They sometimes have enough money to buy a few small luxuries such as special ornaments, "but we don't spend on things a lot of people consider essential; I do not buy any cosmetics, we don't go to movies and I don't drink alcohol."

At 58 years old, Presbyterian churchgoer David George is thinking about how he will maintain a comfortable standard of living in retirement. He is also thinking about the possibility that he may have to work several years past 65 if the superannuation eligibility age rises. Although David would prefer to retire at 60 and do the many things he has postponed for retirement, he says he is realistic and expects that he will need to "maintain work readiness, health and fitness until the age of 67 or even 70".

A rise in the age of eligibility age is also on the mind of the Rev Ray McKendry, 61, who would like to work past 65, however he is aware that an increasing number of older people in the workforce for longer could negatively impact younger people. "If the super age goes up to 67, there are a lot of people who can and will keep working, and this will affect the many young people who are not keen on school looking for jobs that aren't there."

A half-time minister, Ray is hearing from his parish that increasing costs are making life hard for some superannuitants. "One woman got a new heater and her power bill rose from \$150 to \$400 a month; that large bill is making her struggle. Another couple living in a cold, rented council flat spent most of winter sitting in front

## What is the Biblical mandate for giving?

What is it that we owe others as followers of Christ?

All parishes should now have received Giving and Getting, the sixth and latest Church social issues study guide. It examines issues that affect why we give, how we give and what we give – from money and goods to prayer and time.

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All six studies can be downloaded from "publications" on the Presbyterian Church website [www.presbyterian.org.nz/publications](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/publications)



# Innovative project tackles community deprivation

**Papakura East Presbyterian Church has been a key player in a Police project to bring renewal to its neighbourhood.**

**Counties Manukau South Police District launched the Awhi Wraparound Project in May 2008 to target 350 households in a single geographical area that are estimated to be the source of 90 percent of Papakura's crime and social issues.**

The project's aim was to bring social agencies together in a co-ordinated way to renew the community.

When the Rev Geoff King saw a notice about the project in the local newspaper, he decided to attend a public meeting being held at the local marae, and "after a few false starts", Papakura East became heavily involved in the project.

"The area is literally on our doorstep: if you stood at the front door of the church, you could throw a stone into the area."

The church started its involvement by donating 17 Christmas hampers to families identified as particularly in need by the principal of Edward Hillary School. Presbyterian Support Northern also contributed to the hampers, which had an average value of \$400.

The church then decided to sponsor a touch rugby team of seven-year-olds, paying for their fees, uniforms and boots, but also turning up to every game as a fan base.

Members of the congregation looked for other ways to get involved, and became part of a programme serving breakfast at Edward Hillary School, taking responsibility for two mornings a week.

Papakura East's youth group competed in the local touch rugby tournament, where they were initially greeted with suspicion, but after being recognised as breakfast servers, the attitude totally changed, Geoff says. "They were treated with real affection."

Three of retired teachers from the congregation have helped with the school's literacy programme for at-risk children. "They're just changing people's lives in there," Geoff says, and unlike many previous volunteers who only last a couple of weeks or a term, they have stayed.

The school identified a bright student who wanted to be a lawyer "to fight for people's rights". A lawyer in the congregation arranged for the girl and her mother to have a day at court, meeting a Pacific Island woman judge and a lawyer involved in human rights.

The church was heavily involved in a "Children's Day" event held at the school in February. Despite abysmal weather, 100 people from the congregation turned up to support the event. The church's Cook Island group started the day with singing and dancing, and congregation members provided baking and ran a BBQ.

When one family in the project area had to fly back to their home Pacific island because of a family tragedy, on their return their house had been stripped of everything, including fittings, furniture and even firewood.



The "Pikoura" touch rugby team of seven-year-olds is sponsored by Papakura East Presbyterian

When Geoff explained the situation to the congregation, people donated furniture, carpet and vouchers to the family.

"As a minister, I've been humbled by the generosity of spirit of the congregation."

Geoff says the project has made the church much more credible in the community.

"We've put a lot of money in there - but that's the easy part. It's about credibility and functioning relationships, building connections".

"Providing money doesn't really touch the spirit of poverty, which stems from a real disconnection from friends and lack of dignified, health-giving relationships."

Police Counties South Iwi Liaison Officer Tony Tumai says the church's work is seen as "a God send" by the local school and residents.

"The change in this community is phenomenal and is a reflection of the faith that the church has for these people."

Geoff says the project has "been a gift" to the church. "It's given us an opportunity to test the expression of our faith."

"We've done a lot of mission but I've always felt some pressure or sense of guilt as to whether we're impacting our local neighbourhood."

The project has given the church an outlet, he says.

"This is what the church is born for."

But being involved hasn't always been easy, he says. "Kids coming to have breakfast will turn over the tables and throw food. It can be really difficult and discouraging day-to-day. But our people just keep coming back for more."

Geoff says he's also conscious about not developing a culture of dependence through endless handouts. "We want to empower people".

Next on the list is facilitating a Parents Inc parenting course.

By Amanda Wells [Spanz](#)



# Gore youth festival expects big numbers

**About 1700 young people will descend on Gore on 12 December for the Elevate youth festival.**

Previously known as Exo Day, after an Australian youth ministry, the festival has got big enough for its own brand, says Calvin Community Presbyterian Church youth ministries director Marty Redhead.

After kicking off in 2004 with 60 kids attending, last year 1000 came through the gates.

Big names confirmed for 2009 include the Parachute Band, with negotiations also at an advanced stage with singer/songwriter Nathan King.

Marty says the 2009 event, which is held in the field next to the church and charges \$10 for entry, will feature a bigger stage, more technical gear and more activity zones.

These include a “chainsaw zone”, where kids can have a go “under very close supervision”, go-carts, motorbikes, disco, gaming, wood working and knitting. There will also be a “smash zone,” which involves taking to old cars and televisions with a sledge hammer, a “chick zone” and an “art zone”. Sports include a touch competition, climbing wall and volleyball.

Marty says the ideas for activities come from brainstorming sessions with the Calvin youth group.

The festival includes a worship service in the evening that churches from Gore and Eastern Southland are invited to attend. The day is designed “to peak at that point”, Marty says. Most of the young people stay for the service, with one of the big acts following immediately afterwards.

The service will include a worship time lead by the Parachute Band and the speaker will be Jordan Smith, the Auckland-based national youth leader for ACTS Churches.

Marty says a key part of the day is giving people the opportunity to meet Jesus.

“We just want to tell young people that life with God’s pretty awesome.

“We’re doing it to see young people’s lives changed and to see God’s name made famous.”

The church has seen positive effects on its youth ministry, with young people who attend often starting to ask questions and come along to youth group on Friday nights.

A huge team of volunteers from Calvin makes the day happen and many businesses donate goods and services, with major banks making their marquees available free of charge.

Marty says just about everyone in the congregation of 250 helps out in some way on the day.

“Our church is just incredibly generous with their time. We’re having people call us and say they’d like to help.”

Everyone working together on such a big project has positive spin-offs for the church, Marty says. “Our congregation glows.



It’s everyone coming together for one cause.”

People in the community see it as “a Calvin event” and it also boosts the church’s local profile, he says.

The day starts at 2pm and ends at 9.30pm, and a big security team ensures it stays drug and alcohol free.

Many attendees come from the high schools in Gore and the surrounding area, lured by a publicity drive in November that sees sausages, icecream and flyers given out by the Calvin team.

But young people also come from as far away as Dunedin and Canterbury, with many youth groups making special trips down south. **By Amanda Wells** [Spanz](#)

*\*If you’d like more info about Elevate, contact Marty at [marty@calvin.org.nz](mailto:marty@calvin.org.nz) or (03) 208-9973.*

 **Presbyterian Youth Ministry**  
MAKING JESUS CHRIST KNOWN 

**Are you a young person moving to a new location ?**  
Let us welcome you with a free drink

Are you moving next year for study, work or just a change of scene? The Pressy tribe wants to welcome you to your new place by taking you out to a café for a free coffee (fair trade!), Phoenix Cola or drink of your choice.

Presbytlity is about hospitality and connecting young people with a youth worker in their new location. We can even help you link up with a new church if you want.

Email Carlton Johnstone, Presbyterian Church national youth ministry development leader at [carlton@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:carlton@presbyterian.org.nz) with your name and where you are moving to, and a Pressy youth leader will be in touch soon.

# Spreading the Christmas message

## Hampers bring Christmas joy to prisoners' families

Christchurch Presbyterian women are organising Christmas cheer for the families of prisoners.

The Association of Presbyterian Women's Christchurch presbyterial will again this year donate hampers to Pillars, which is a charity that supports prisoners' children and their families through volunteer mentors, social workers and other support services.

Last year, the group filled four cars with their hampers. Mary Stewart, Christchurch presbyterial's parish and community convenor, says the Pillars staff were overwhelmed by the delivery.

Mary says APW is particularly strong in Christchurch. Monthly meetings featuring a guest speaker attract about 50 people.

After having a speaker from Pillars at a monthly meeting several years ago, the group sent some toys as part of their usual Christmas drive in support of several charities.

Last year, the economic climate meant they decided hampers would be more appropriate, and that they would support only Pillars.

"We had a wonderful response from our parish groups," Mary says, so decided to repeat the exercise this year.

The hampers are made up of basic groceries with a few luxury Christmas items. They will be delivered in late November, so that they can be passed on to the families in plenty of time for Christmas.

*\* For more information about pillars, see [www.pillars.org.nz](http://www.pillars.org.nz)*

*You can find out more about APW's work at [www.presbyterian.org.nz/apw](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/apw)*

## Youth group fills shoe boxes for Christmas

Waihao Co-operating, a small parish in South Canterbury, has set its youth group a big task.

The group of 25 young people will fill 50 shoeboxes with gifts to send overseas for Christmas, as part of the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child programme, which delivers more than 300,000 boxes from New Zealand and Australia to South East Asia and the South Pacific.

The boxes can include educational gifts, soft toys, clothing, and other useful items like toothbrushes, with New Zealand boxes sent to the Solomon Islands and Fiji.

Waihao's Kathy McCulloch says the church has participated for the past four years, and uses a mid-winter Christmas dinner and games night to kickstart the donations.

Nearby Timaru is the collection point for the South Island, and Kathy is hoping to take the youth group on a trip to help sort through all the shoe boxes.

*\* For more about Samaritan's Purse and the shoe box programme see [www.samaritanspurse.org.nz](http://www.samaritanspurse.org.nz)*



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# First interns

## complete ministry training

**In December the first two people trained under the internship training model will graduate from the Knox Centre of Ministry and Leadership.**

Brendan O'Hagan and Anne Stewart have completed the two-year training programme, with both about to take up parish ministry positions. Distance student Jenny Doyle will also graduate and intern Junghun Choi is near graduation.

The internship model means that students spent 70 percent of their time working and learning in a parish placement and 30 percent completing assignments and attending intensive courses at the Knox Centre in Dunedin. It replaced a residential system, where trainee ministers spent two years together in Dunedin.

Interns are placed into one parish for the two years, and have a mentoring minister. They also have a supervisor and a support team, as well regular communication with Knox Centre staff.

Graduating intern Anne Stewart has been placed at St Stephen's in Christchurch, where her husband Martin is minister.

She says she found the programme more attractive than the previous model, because she did not have to move to Dunedin and because of the increased practical component.

Anne took some role in worship every week, preaching about once a month. She also ran a foot clinic, organised volunteers and was heavily involved in pastoral visiting.

Anne will stay at St Stephen's, taking up a half-time position in December when her internship concludes.

While some people feared a loss of collegiality under the internship model, Anne says this has not been the reality, with strong collegiality developed in the presbytery as well as intense interaction during interns' block courses in Dunedin.

Nyalle Paris is about to complete the first year of his internship at St Andrew's Invercargill.

He says the academic part of the course is challenging and relevant to parish life. "I come back from a block course and have things to put into practice."

Keeping the balance between parish and course work can be difficult, he says, but is helped by the clear initial understanding developed with the session, facilitated by Knox Centre Principal the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding.

The Rev Phil King of St Margaret's Bishopdale in Christchurch was mentoring minister to graduating intern Brendan O'Hagan. He says hosting an intern has been a very positive experience for his church.

Phil says it took a while to establish how things would work, with this first intake of interns being "guinea pigs".

Brendan has experienced the full range of parish ministry, from preaching a couple of times a month to worship-leading, children's ministry and pastoral care. He's run a successful series

of social events, including dinners and a mid-winter evening, that strengthened connections within the parish.

The church very much "owned" having an intern, Phil says, and people feel proud of Brendan as he moves into his own charge at Wairau Presbyterian Parish in Blenheim.

Some members of the congregation are considering how they can work to maintain the social events he introduced.

Graham says 12 students are due to start the first year of the internship programme next year, with another six students in their final year in 2010.

He says the large intake reflects a definite increase in interest in ministry as a career. "Internship is seen as a more flexible training option. It minimises disruption to students and their families, especially if their spouse is working."

The average age of ministry students has dropped from early to mid 40s, with many now in their late 20s or early 30s, and the theological, gender and cultural diversity has increased. Graham says Knox Centre staff are deliberating shoulder-tapping potential ministers, attending events such as youth conference Connect and creating opportunities through initiatives like the music scholarships, which see six young people visit the Centre for a workshop.

With 12 new interns to place next year, it has been a challenge finding host churches, Graham says. "The biggest struggle is in Auckland," with Wellington also difficult.

Parishes need to pay interns 80 percent of stipend, though significant support is available from PSDS and the Synod of Otago and Southland. Graham says his aim is to bring the cost to parishes down to under \$15,000 (or \$10,000 in the Synod of Otago and Southland area).

The success of an internship depends on careful initial negotiation of expectations and responsibilities, Graham says, with the intern there to learn about every facet of ministry rather than just filling a gap in the church leadership team.

Graham says that because so many people are involved in an intern's training, strong lines of communication are vital. "We've got to constantly work at that."

Refinements made during the past two years include a reduction in assessment, after interns found combining assignments and parish work, without any holidays as under the old system, created too much pressure.

Graham says there is also "huge pressure and expectation" placed on the teaching programme by the Church. "People expect graduates to be the agents of change and renewal who can grow the Church," without compromising any of the fundamentals of parish ministry.

"There are huge expectations on parish ministers to reverse the decline of the church. "Often ministers can be the scapegoats, and we have to equip people for that."

By Amanda Wells [Spanz](#)

# New guide advises schools on religion

## The Human Rights Commission has launched a guide for schools titled "Religion in New Zealand Schools: Questions and Concerns"

The guide says it aims to provide answers to common questions on how schools and their communities can give a place to religion "that ensures security and dignity for all".

The place of religion in New Zealand schools is a complex area, says Joanna Collinge, executive director of the Human Rights Commission. "It has been the source of a steady stream of enquiries and complaints to the Human Rights Commission and the New Zealand School Trustees Association over many years".

The publication offers advice and case studies on how schools can respect the law and not discriminate against their students on the grounds of religious belief or lack of it. It provides explanations of what the Human Rights Act and the Bill of Rights Act and Education Act say about religion in schools.

Joanna says that questions raised by parents, whānau, teachers, trustees and students

range from the permissibility of hot cross buns or the celebration of Easter, and the question of whether children from non-religious families are discriminated against by provision of religious instruction, to the role of waiata and karakia in schools.

Race Relations Commissioner Joris de Bres says the guidelines are needed because New Zealand has changed since the legislation about religion in schools came into force in the 1960s. "Today we live in a vastly different society, with many cultures and religions, including a third of New Zealanders who say they have no religion."

The guidelines were prepared by the NZ Diversity Action Programme. A draft was written by Paul Morris, Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University, and used as the basis for consultation with a range of stakeholders, including faith and non-faith groups, schools, the School Board of Trustees Association and the Ministry of Education. Some religious groups have expressed disappointment that they were excluded from the consultation process.

Responding to the new guidelines, Carol Craymer, principal of Queen Margaret College in Wellington, says they have been designed for state schools where "education is meant to be secular, but that is difficult because at times you do need to refer to religion. And religion is taught in primary schools."

Carol says that for Queen Margaret College, an independent Presbyterian girls' school, the guidelines reflect what they promote: "to provide an inclusive Christian environment for students".

"We have religious observation but you opt into that with a school like ours. We have religious education where students learn about Judaism and other non-Christian religions. It's about tolerance; it's important to know about and appreciate other religions."

Graeme Yule, headmaster of Scots College in Wellington, can see a few problems with the guidelines from his school's perspective.

"We were established to offer an alternative to a secular education. All students and staff agree to support our special character; we deliver an education in the Presbyterian tradition."

Graeme says that all students are required to undertake religious education and that there are regular Chapel services.

"Christian values are at our core. Not all of our students are Christian, or practise their faith, however they all must agree to attend Chapel and support our character before they are offered a place here; they make their choice prior to enrolling. Having said this, it is not our mission to convert students to faith; rather to provide education and an environment where Christianity is celebrated and part of their education."

Graeme notes that young people are discerning and able to make their own decisions. "With teenagers, the more you make something compulsory the more they are likely to rebel".

By Angela Singer Spanz

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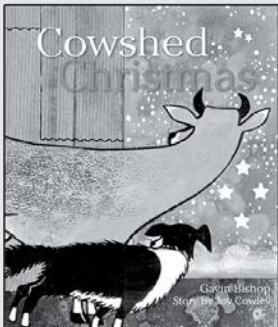
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# Foodbanks face sharp end of recession

**Foodbanks supported or run by Presbyterian churches have seen huge increases in demand during the past year.**

In Wellington, Downtown Community Ministry's foodbank has experienced a 33 percent increase in demand for food. This foodbank receives donations from St Andrew's on the Terrace Presbyterian Church, St John's in the City Presbyterian Church and the Ngaio Union Church.

In Auckland, Presbyterian Support Northern operates a foodbank at St David's Presbyterian Church in Grafton. In June, demand increased by 60 percent compared to June 2008, and was up 100 percent in July on the previous year. Presbyterian Support Northern's budget service manager Maureen Little says that demand for food parcels rises in winter "when the higher power bills come in and the household food budget gets cut".

St John's Presbyterian Church in Rotorua now provides its community with more than 500 food parcels each year. St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Howick has seen the number of families in need of food parcels rise from 36 in January to more than 70 in March, and there has been a 32 percent increase in food bank requirements.

Helen Matheson runs the Waipu Presbyterian Parish foodbank "for folk in the community who find themselves on hard times". Clients find their way to the foodbank through word of mouth, by responding to the foodbank advertisements in the local newspaper or are referred by Helen's husband Bruce, a budget advisor and debt advocate. "We don't ask any questions the first two times," Helen says, "but if a client's need for food parcels is ongoing, we refer them to get advice".

Helen says the foodbank aims to supply a suitable food parcel on the same day it is requested. "It's made-up to meet the needs of the client; if there's a baby, then milk powder and nappies can be added."

Food that is filling but of dubious nutritional value is not provided because Helen wants clients to enjoy "good healthy food that can be used to make balanced meals". Unlike many larger food banks, Waipu does not carry a stock of canned and dried foods. "People used to bring cans to the church but that food just isn't healthy enough; it's high in sugar and salt."

The emphasis now is on fresh foods. A local farmer donates meat, seasonal vegetables come out of Helen's own garden, and cheese, milk, butter, eggs, fruit, bread, potatoes, onions, rice and pasta are staples not luxuries. "There are no sugary cereals and sweets, just a packet of plain biscuits. If a client wants the ingredients to bake, I can get what's needed". All bought food is paid for by the Waipu Presbyterian Parish.

Helen is concerned that there are people in the community in need of food who are not coming forward. "You just don't get to hear about everyone and there are some desperate cases. There are people



**Food collected for the Oamaru foodbank by the Glenavy Kids of the Cross youth group in July 2009**

suffering mental illness who just get to the point where they can no longer cope. I heard from a local shopkeeper about a mother with four hungry children and took a food box straight to her."

Hidden hunger is not new. The 2002 National Nutrition Survey found that just over one fifth of New Zealanders reported that their household can only sometimes afford to eat properly and that food runs out because of lack of money either sometimes or often.

Young people are increasingly food bank clients at the Wadestown Presbyterian Church King's Table food bank in Wellington. Phyllis Purdie runs the food bank, which she began 16 years ago "when the local doctor and Plunket told us there was a demand that was not being met, so we joined with the local Anglican church to provide help". "The numbers we assist have doubled; we see a lot more couples and single people because they are just not getting the help they need."

Phyllis says King's Table clients come via word of mouth or respond to a notice in the local mall. Food parcels are provided "by appointment, it's a basic food parcel that includes laundry detergent and clothing if needed". Food is donated by regular donors and the Wadestown congregation "but if we run short we can call on the Wellington City Mission. We all help each other out".

**By Angela Singer** [Spanz](#)



## Church Property Trustees

### Capital funds use widened

Parish property funds held in the Presbyterian Investment Fund may now be used for growth projects.

- » In the past, the proceeds of parish property sales could be spent only on building-related projects, but the 2008 Assembly ruled that capital funds may now also be released for growth projects.
- » Parishes will need to justify how the proposed use of capital funds fits into their mission plan, and explain how the project will contribute to the overall growth of the Church.
- » Presbyteries will be asked to rigorously assess proposals against the criteria adopted by Assembly. These stress the need for projects to enhance the regional strategic development of the Church.



### Letter to the editor

I write in response to your excellent September *Spanz* article raising awareness on the urgent need for law reform around alcohol use in New Zealand. I expect all Association of Presbyterian Women members to strongly support an urgent and new approach to curbing alcohol misuse. The New Zealand drinking culture must change, otherwise we will see more domestic violence, more fights, road carnage, foetal alcohol syndrome, and more teenagers with hampered brain development.

Your readers may not be aware that APW's views are gathered through its representation at regional branches of the National Council of Women (together with those of other women's organisations). All the regional views are collated by the NCW national office and a submission written and presented to Parliament. NCW is a powerful lobby group and represents the views of nearly 400,000 women across New Zealand. It is highly respected by Government and its voice is always given serious consideration. NCW's recent introduction of "Girl Talk", an online group, takes account of the views shared by Generation X and Y participants.

Sadly the "she'll be right" Kiwi attitude to alcohol has produced incredible harm to our society and way of life. We can encourage positive change by supporting the campaign for law reform through our churches and presbyteries.

Heather Tate  
APW National Convener

## GOING FURTHER

'Going further' for young people

**Young adults are invited to a summer discipleship event on Great Barrier Island.**

Run by Presbyterian Youth Ministry, the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership and Studentsoul, "Going Further 2010" has 50 places for people aged 17-30. The only criteria is that you need to be part of a Presbyterian or Uniting church.

Knox Centre Auckland coordinator the Rev Mark Johnston says Going Further is about investing in young people.

"This is an opportunity to be renewed and refreshed personally."

It's not a youth ministry training event but is focused solely on personal discipleship.

Mark says some young people can find themselves in isolated situations, especially outside the cities, with few others of their age in their congregation.

Often people need to sign up for a year's study or travel to a main centre if they want to explore spiritual growth, but this event offers "an opportunity to grow where they already are," Mark says.

The deadline for registration is 15 December, and Going Further runs from 2-7 February 2010. The cost is \$300, excluding transport (some transport grants are available from the Knox Centre).

For more information, contact Mark at [mark@knoxcentre.ac.nz](mailto:mark@knoxcentre.ac.nz) or check out [www.goingfurther.org.nz](http://www.goingfurther.org.nz)

For more information contact:

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## Hymn writer stresses the power of words

**People underestimate the influence that lyrics have on their theology, according to Shirley Erena Murray.**

“Hymns are massively important because they stay in the memory.”

The Kapiti-based hymn writer says ministers need to remember that the words of songs and hymns are remembered long after the words of spoken messages have faded.

“Words carried by music are more important than any sermon they will ever write.”

Shirley’s words are sung every week in churches around the country. She’s behind hymns such as “Upside Down Christmas” and “Our life has its Seasons”, as well as a hymn for Anzac Day.

Born in Invercargill in 1931, Shirley has received numerous awards during her writing career, including this year being made a Fellow of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. In 2001 she was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to community hymn writing; the first person to be honoured in this way. In December Shirley will be awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Otago.

Shirley continues an active writing schedule, having just completed a hymn for the American Guild of Organists to be performed at their 10-year meeting in Washington Cathedral.

It’s difficult to say how long it takes to write a hymn, Shirley says. “Once you have a good first line or phrase, that’s very helpful.”

After completing her text, Shirley sends it to a composer, who puts it to music.

She works with up to 40 composers, including well-known Dunedin musician Colin Gibson and Waikanae-based Gillian Bray.

While some composers get the sense immediately, she says, others do not and she doesn’t always like the result. “But overall I’m happy with the variety of interpretations.”

Shirley says she never listens to Hillsong-style praise and worship, “because it’s not saying anything to me”.

“I love Jesus and Jesus loves me’ – we’ve got to move beyond that.”

Church music needs to relate to our lives and concerns, she says. “We need ‘comfort hymns’ but you can’t let that dominate. I need to be taken out of myself and into the world.”

Shirley’s texts have appeared in more than 140 collections worldwide and been translated into numerous languages. Her work is particularly popular in the United States and Canada.

Her work finds broad use in the US, from Mennonite communities to Catholics and progressive congregations. One hymn, “Come and find the Quiet Centre”, which was written for an Association of Presbyterian Women conference held in Tawa, was listed in the previous US president’s chaplain’s office devotions.

Many of her hymns reflect environmental concerns. “I have a sad feeling that we’ve never got past ‘all things bright and beautiful’. We need to take on what it means to care for Creation rather than admire it.”

Peace is another key theme. “To me that’s the real heart of what Jesus came to demonstrate.”

Out of everything she has written, the Anzac hymn has attracted the most feedback, because of a verse that honours the bravery of conscientious objectors. The New Zealand Defence Force and the RSA have furnished critical comments, as have some random encounters, including an upset woman on a train. The hymn has been used twice at Anzac day commemorations in Gallipoli and Chunuk Bair.

Shirley describes hymn writing as “a very public thing”. “It’s very exposing being part of a congregation singing your hymns.”

Many of Shirley’s hymns were tested on the congregation at St Andrew’s on the Terrace, Wellington, where her husband the Very Rev John Murray was minister from 1975-1993.

She says she grew out of self consciousness early on, because St Andrew’s was “very used to accepting new music”.

Aspiring hymn writers need to immerse themselves in the hymns already written, Shirley says. “You have to know the treasures from the past that are still being sung; and then ask ‘what is not being said that I need to write about?’”

Hymns that are repetitious or don’t resonate with the people of their time will not endure, she says.

“You have to express things succinctly and clearly, with beauty.”

Her latest hymn is always her favourite, she says, though “there are some that I hope have proved more useful”. These include the carol “Star Child”, “Where Mountains Rise to Open Skies” and the Anzac hymn.

Shirley says the new ecumenical hymnbook “Hope is our Song”, launched at the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust’s 2009 conference, marks New Zealand as “an outstanding hymn-writing nation”. At the conference, the executive director of the Hymn Society in the US and Canada, Professor Deborah Carlton Loftis, will formally present Shirley with the award of Fellow.

By Amanda Wells [Spanz](#)





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# Garden plants seeds of community relationship

**Though serving its local school, St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Invercargill has grown both its children's programme and congregation.**

Nyalle Paris, who is a ministry intern at the parish, says the relationship began when the church ran an art-focused holiday programme in 2007 and asked several local schools to promote it. One, New River School, was particularly enthusiastic. Twelve children attended the programme, with each completing a work of art on canvas to take home.

Some members of the church attended the "Standing out in your community" seminar in Gore last year, and then-Moderator the Very Rev Pamela Tankersley's visit brought what Nyalle describes as a "prophetic word" from Jeremiah 29:7: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

The church was prompted to think about their place in the community, Nyalle says and realised that they had already taken the first steps. So they asked New River School if there was any way in which they could help out.

It happened that the school had received a grant for material to construct a garden as part of a healthy living initiative, but could not find any volunteers to provide the labour.

So over the course of several months, about 10 men from the church built the garden. It is a 60 foot by 20 foot enclosed vegetable garden complete with tool shed and tunnel house.

The church received a community group award from Environment Southland for this work, which elder Roger Harrington describes as virtually unheard of for a church.

Classes have a plot each in the garden, and teachers have given lessons on how to cook the vegetables.

Roger says that before it began its community outreach, the church had become "internally focused".

"The community knew there was a building there but they didn't know what happened inside."

After the garden project, people were keen to do more, Roger says, and they asked the school if there were other needs. "They asked for one or two people to help with reading. Now eight to 10 people are helping out every week."

"The relationship is just fabulous."

The school provided training to the reading mentors, who spend 30 minutes every week one-on-one with a child.

In 2008, the church also took on a Boys Brigade Iconz programme, for both girls and boys, which meets every week. Last year about 15 children were attending, but since the relationship with New River has grown, it's jumped to more than 70.

"It's created a buzz of energy in the community."

Nyalle says more than 90 percent of the Iconz kids are coming from the school, with the growth necessitating a split into two separate age-based groups.

**The garden constructed for New River School by St Andrew's Presbyterian Church**

Leadership is provided by a part-time youth worker, with some other leaders coming from the congregation.

There's a role for everyone to play in helping out. "We've got older folk coming along to make milo and drinks."

The congregation has grown, with up to 100 people now attending services, and its make up has changed, with 1/3 being Pacific Island people.

The church decided that the first Sunday of the month would be a kids Iconz outreach service. "This month, we had 29 children there," Nyalle says.

"When I started in 2007, two kids would come up for the children's talk. Last Sunday there were 15."

Some of the parents of Iconz kids have started coming to the church, and some are also helping out with the leadership of the programme.

Nyalle says the church made a deliberate decision not to be involved in the Bible in Schools programme that's being run at New River. "We're not there to proselytise; we don't want people to think we have an ulterior motive."

Focussing on how to best serve the school and community instead means "one thing leads to another", he says.

"This is mission on our back door."

By Amanda Wells Spanz

# Light parties draw huge crowds to churches

**Presbyterian churches around the country every year hold Halloween-alternative parties that attract hundreds, or even thousands, of children from the community.**

St Andrew's in Geraldine first held a small "light party" about three years ago. In 2008, more than 100 children attended, says organiser Lorraine Morgan.

Children attending dress up – but no witches, devils, ghosts or "scary" costumes are allowed.

Lorraine says most parents don't want their kids walking around the streets and "trick or treating", and are grateful to the church for providing another option.

The party, which attracts five- to 13-year-olds, is held in the school hall. A bouncy castle, 10-metre climbing wall and "human bowling ball", all owned by the church, are among the attractions. Carnival-style games include picking from a bunch of keys to open a treasure chest, guessing the number of sweets in a jar, and fishing for ducks with a magnet. After the games, a disco runs till 7.30pm.

At the end of the night, each child leaves with a bag containing lollies, a chocolate bar and a bookmark with a Christian message. Lorraine says most of the children come from the community, with only a few church families taking part.

The church secures sponsorship from frozen food firm McCains and from local shops.

The congregation, which totals about 190, gets involved by donating lollies during the weeks leading up to the event, and helping out on the night with the food and games.

Lorraine says the event is mostly funded through proceeds from the church's second-hand shop, which also funds its school holiday programme and other events like the successful "Fathers' Day in the Park".

Farther north, Auckland's St Columba @ Botany has been running light parties for six years, and last year attracted between 3000 and 5000 children. Organiser Sue Ellis says accurate counting is difficult given the



Children enjoy St Columba @ Botany's massive light party

size of the crowd. "People queue for ages before the doors even open".

Every part of the church buildings, ground and car parks are used for the event, which has a budget of \$10,000.

Attractions include a vertical bungee, rock climbing wall, pirate ship, and "lots of bouncy castles."

Children pay \$2 to enter, with extra charges for some of the rides, which include a small train around the grounds. Games on offer include plate smashing and gumboot throwing, with about 20 different carnival games aimed at younger children.

Unlike some other light parties, at St Columba's children must be accompanied by an adult.

Sue says the children get lollies "by the multitude". "They go home feeling like they haven't missed out."

There's also brochures and pamphlets about the church's programmes on display through the venue, and included in goody bags.

"We get families that come along to church as a result," Sue says. "People just need to see that we're actually good guys; we're quite fun, we enjoy ourselves."

About 200 volunteers from the church make the light party happen. Some meet up weekly to put the thousands of goody bags together, others serve food or provide security. People take flyers to give out to friends or neighbours, and the local newspaper publicises the event.

"It really brings the congregation together. It's completely owned by the church, and each year it's grown."

The light party at St Margaret's Bishopdale, in Christchurch, attracts about 160 kids from the community and about 20 from the church, says organiser Andrew Howley.

Like the other light parties, carnival-style games, a bouncy castle and disco are key elements. New features this year include a bubble machine and lots of different wands for children to create their own bubbles.

The party includes a five-minute talk, pitched at seven-year-old level, perhaps about "why we're not into celebrating scary Halloween".

Children pay \$2 each, or \$5 a family, for the party, and also get fed a sausage, drink and popcorn.

The St Margaret's congregation of 120 people are "massively involved" in the event.

Each home group takes a different role; for example, looking after cooking and food, security, or assembling goody bags. Older kids from the youth programme run the carnival games.

By Amanda Wells Spanz

**Churches can register their "light party" for free at [www.lightparty.org.nz](http://www.lightparty.org.nz), which owns the trademark.**

## In brief

### First "mega presbytery" becomes reality

People from Waikato and the Bay of Plenty celebrated the inauguration of the new Kaimai presbytery on Saturday 12 September.

The two-day gathering in Rotorua included keynote addresses from the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding, a dinner and workshops.

### Wellington's Pacific churches fight violence

More than 90 people came to a retreat organised by Wellington ministers from Pacific Island Presbyterian churches to talk about family violence.

"The power to stop violence is in your hands" was the theme of the one-day event in September at PIC Newtown, which was conducted in the Samoan language.

Leaders, elders and women's fellowship members attended the retreat, discussing how they could create, support and promote ways to prevent family violence. As a result, an action plan is being developed for churches in the region.

The day was the first gathering in a series that will discuss social topics, and is being funded and supported by the Ministry of Social Development.

### Church's spiritual anthology draws hundreds of would-be authors

More than 460 people entered Albury Pleasant Point Presbyterian's competition to be published in its *Fuel for the Soul* anthology, with 59 pieces of writing eventually selected.

A team from the church produced the anthology, and the huge level of interest from all over the country means they are considering running another competition in 2011.

Organiser Karalyn Joyce says the anthology is designed to take the reader on a journey, with "messages of hope and promise through to more spiritual, stronger pieces of writing". It also features scenic photographs.

Karalyn describes *Fuel for the Soul* as "honest, raw and from the heart".



Archives staff enjoy their new, more spacious, premises

# Archives moves out of basement

**The Presbyterian Archives is enjoying purpose-built space in Dunedin after many years in a dark basement.**

The Archives' shift is part of a wider redevelopment project that will see the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership shift all its operations into Knox College's Hewitson wing.

General Assembly 2008 agreed to contribute \$756,000 to the project.

The Archives collection includes material from parishes and presbyteries, as well as personal papers from ministers and Moderators.

Archives Director Yvonne Wilkie says the staff are enjoying the new offices, which

she describes as a huge improvement on their previous working conditions. Six people, two of whom are part-timers on contract, work for the Archives.

The new facility features double glazing and climate control to ensure that the condition of documents is maintained.

There is a readers' room, which is used, on average, by three researchers a day.

The new facility has 1.5km of shelving, although when items currently in boxes are unpacked, this will be full.

The collection at the moment is 2000 linear metres, up from 380 when Yvonne began her role. About 500 boxes are still stored off site.



## Daily living in Vanuatu

A typical day in Vanuatu starts as early as 3:30 in the morning, with the roosters competing to be heard. The first bell rings at 5:00, but we never move that early. By 6:30, I am preparing bread and off to community devotions at 7:10. The kids start correspondence school at 7:30, finishing by lunch.

Meals are fairly simple – we buy some NZ foods, but most are too expensive. Also it is terribly embarrassing coming home from town on the truck with loads of food that our neighbors could never have. The kids aren't fond of powdered milk so we use it to make porridge when rolled oats are available. This is the first year that you can get wholemeal flour, so its bread and jam for lunch. We have meat three nights a week, which is far more than the Ni-vans get. I have never baked so much in my life. We consume masses of cakes as well as having to supply them for the locals. There seems to be a national obsession with cake. They look to ex-pats for birthday cakes, cakes to sell, and cakes for shared meals. The kids call it "the white man's gift".

The generator comes on at 6am and the batteries get charged. We have to watch our electricity use carefully throughout the day. Ken's only grumble is that he doesn't like being told when to go to bed – the generator goes off at 8:30 – 9:00 in the evening and our solar power is limited, so off to bed we go. We have enough power for a small fridge, which is a benefit to the community. We store meat for those who can afford it occasionally. We had two monthly periods without a fridge, which wasn't too bad in the end – life without a fridge is possible.

Part of daily life is lots of children. We are the local suppliers of DVDs, sports equipment and books. When you hand the kids a pile of books, they cheer and sit on the porch reading eagerly. We are blessed to have the nicest house on campus, so on a dark rainy day we have a gathering of kids at the house.



Hope (left) and Jenny (centre) travel to town on local transport

I usually wash the laundry by hand twice a week and we have a house girl who does the rest. This also means the kids only have to fetch drinking water on the weekends. Transportation into Luganville is an uncomfortable ride on the back of a truck sometimes sitting on taro or coconut, but I enjoy it for some reason.

There is not a lot of variety here. My understanding of poverty now includes the fact that poverty is boring. Poverty is about a lack of choice. They have little choice of activities, jobs, education and creativity. Surely part of being created in the image of God is that we all long to explore and create. My appreciation for things hasn't increased but for it has for the value of choice and variety. **By Jenny Williams** Spanz

*The Rev Ken and Jenny Williams and their children Beth, Kaye, Hope, Caleb and Peter are spending two years serving at Talua Ministry Training Centre in Vanuatu*

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# Give us a chance to survive...

On the morning of 29 September, a five-metre-high tsunami hit Samoa. It was generated by a massive earthquake, with the waves also causing considerable damage, deaths and injuries in parts of Tonga and American Samoa. More than 150 people died, with hundreds injured and several thousand left homeless.

It was a shocking event very close to home for New Zealanders. We have close ties with the Pacific, share our home with Samoan and Tongan communities and know that New Zealand too could be one day struck by large earthquake and tsunami. Not surprisingly, Kiwis were quick to respond generously as media coverage highlighted the devastation. People began filling shipping containers with food, household goods, and construction materials, but were quickly advised to give more targeted and appropriate aid. They organised fundraising events and special services. The media focused on New Zealanders saving the people of Samoa.

Such media coverage and reaction to emergencies can give a very misleading impression. It implies that the “helpless” victims are sitting around in the disaster zone waiting for help to be delivered by overseas agencies. Yet when disaster strikes, it is local people who give the first and life-saving aid.

When Victoria Lio Nansen heard of the tsunami devastation on the southeast of Upolu island, she left her village on the northern coast to help. She assisted with clearing damaged houses and



Ben Fraser/Act for Peace-NCCA

Cleaning up after the tsunami

readying the church for Sunday. “We came here to help the people and clean up the chapel for mass. We feel so sad as this tsunami affects all of Samoa,” Victoria said. The strong bonds of fellowship and generosity that bind Samoan society helped everyone in the aftermath. Local churches were crucial to providing immediate survival needs.

In the months to come, what the people really need help with is to rebuild, replenish and develop the resilience that enables them to survive and makes them less vulnerable in the future. This is where CWS funding is going.

Most people have been left without work and are struggling to recover and rebuild their livelihoods. Tourism and fishing were significantly affected and it will take months to recover. Nearly 4000 people were made homeless. Pain and psychological trauma accompany their material losses. Fortunately, access to food has not been disrupted, with the inland plantations unaffected. The churches have mobilised local support and advocated for survivors’ rights to ensure no one is left out of the recovery phase. Pastors provided counselling to families and organised memorial/burial services for victims

In Tonga, CWS partner Tonga Community Development Trust says assistance with rebuilding will be needed in Niuatoputapu, where most homes were swept away. The Catholic Church, 600 metres inland and one on the few buildings left standing, showed a “tide mark” on the side of the building four metres high. They work with villages throughout Tonga to better prepare them when disaster strikes.

It is this approach to emergencies and ongoing action against poverty that underlies the work of Christian World Service. Good aid and assistance is not about handouts; it is about local community action that develops the strength, knowledge and confidence for people to look after themselves.

In his endorsement of the Christmas Appeal, Moderator the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding says that followers of Jesus are called to show solidarity and compassion for the most vulnerable, as Jesus did. CWS gives you the opportunity to do this. Graham says: “one of the impressive things about CWS is that it partners and supports organisations that are already well established in those areas of need. This should help us give with confidence, knowing that we are contributing to long-term solutions not just to quick fixes. I commend this Christmas Appeal to you.” Please support the CWS Christmas Appeal generously.

Give Us a Chance  
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Support the Christmas Appeal 2009

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## Let's Press Go together

Press Go is about coming together to fund innovative projects that grow the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. We're calling for donations from individuals and parishes, but we're also calling for bright spark ideas from churches. What ideas would you have to grow your church, if money wasn't a barrier? We want to pool resources so that dream growth projects around New Zealand become reality.

Check out [www.presbyterian.org.nz/pressgo](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/pressgo) or contact Brendan Sweeney on 04 801-6000 or [brendan@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:brendan@presbyterian.org.nz)



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\*Bible Society New Zealand research 2009

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