

A group of children are sliding down a water slide. They are laughing and splashing water. The scene is bright and sunny, with water droplets in the air. The children are wearing swimwear. The overall mood is joyful and energetic.

# Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

MARCH 2010, ISSUE 42

Press Go  
kicks  
into action

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

# Can we find a common language?

**My initial feeling about the Parliament of World Religions was one of disappointment, after reading a Christian bishop's welcoming letter. It used Christian in-house language that seemed exclusive and domineering. I was left wondering where the bigger vision was. Was there a common language? A language that did justice to our own religious tradition but also allowed room for encouraging something fresh and new to emerge in the exchanges between religions?**

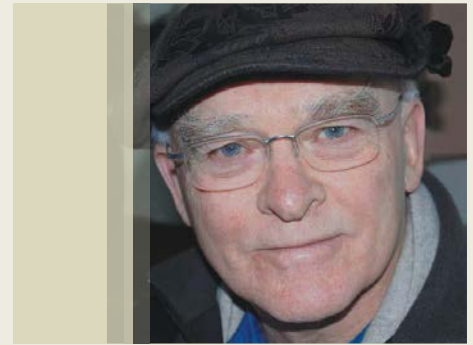
From the opening plenary session, a common echo began; that we live in a world facing huge and revolutionary problems. These problems could not be resolved by any one religious tradition, or any one powerful Government. In response to this call, many in the question time were asking how to handle our sense of paralysis in the face of such large and intractable issues. Where do we get the power to do anything that will make a difference?

One of the early sessions declared that if progress was to be made on these big world issues, we in the religious communities need to become bi-lingual. While we need a religious language for communicating in-house, we also need to develop a language of caring, sharing and co-operation between participating interest groups. This needs to be a public language that stimulates, excites and motivates people into action.

Then I attended two seminars that came to dominate my thoughts for the rest of the event. The first by Andrew Cohen challenged us to explore a mindset that would give the possibility of our world being more than just a place of survival. He maintained that while the impulse to survive is built into the human DNA, we as human beings need to tap into the "impulse to evolve". We need to connect into the idea of becoming "more". This means getting back to the timeless creative energy that is the "yes" before the "big bang". Our purpose is to respond and reflect a living relationship to this creative life source. When we do, he said, we will be instruments in partnership with the Evolutionary Spirit of the Living God.

This approach involves a bi-lingual language that treasures the unique contribution of all other parts of the creation. This evolutionary impulse is forward looking, seeking to participate in the emerging new. If the evolutionary impulse is driving us, this will mean we can fearlessly collaborate with the "other". Awakening to evolutionary impulse, you discover a part of yourself that is good and that seeks the good in others.

The other seminar that touched me deeply was entitled, "The Digital Revolution in the Age of Religious Pluralism." Here the three presenters, Leo Bruinick, Rabbi Brad Hirschfield and Rabbi Irwin Kula, declared that the web revolution was much bigger than the printing revolution of the 1600s. The fourth largest community of people



Rod Mitchell

is the Internet, with its power for good and evil immense. The presenters encouraged all people of good will to consider participating in this very public conversation. We need to learn a language that is emotionally engaging and that will touch people at a deep level.

In the final session, every tradition represented gave a blessing to the Parliament. The Christian blessing, delivered by a bishop, had all the heavy tones of a sermon with exclusive Christian language as its delivery vehicle. The Parliament was silent and shocked. Indigenous people had made a number of requests of the Parliament, with one that asked Christian communities to stop destroying native people's cultures and religions receiving spontaneous applause that seemed to go on for some time. I was shocked by the depth of feeling being expressed. In the closing farewell, it became embarrassingly obvious to me that we as people who honour the Christian faith as our primary source of identity and strength have a lot of work to do on learning how to be bi-lingual.

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# Spanz

Presbyterian Church of  
Aotearoa New Zealand

MARCH 2010 Issue 42

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ISSN 1175 5202

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## Next issue

June 2010  
Advertising deadline  
19 April 2010

## Design

Tangerine

## Printing

Lithoprint

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## Cover Photograph

Knox Waitara's youth enjoy summer  
Credit: Dennis Flett

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

## Moderator's Musings

**One of my childhood memories is of family outings at Muriwai, a popular beach on Auckland's west coast. Along with its surf, Muriwai is known for its gannet colony, which nests on a couple of large rocks jutting out into the sea at the southern end of the beach. The rocks form a channel through which the surf seethes and rushes.**

I must have visited Muriwai around the time that Colin McCahon was living there in the 1970s. I only became aware of this a few years ago, when I attended an art exhibition that included several of McCahon's Muriwai paintings. One of these in particular – "A Necessary Protection Landscape (1972)" – grabbed my attention.

Like a lot of McCahon's later works, it's an abstract painting in black and white. Two dominant rectangular shapes to the left and right of the painting depict the Muriwai rocks. Grey cloud and spray above the rocks merges with the surf between the rocks to form a Tau cross, named after a letter in the Greek alphabet and representative of a gate or opening. A multitude of black shapes above the rocks and in the foreground represent gannets in flight and diving into the sea.

I like the contrast that is formed between the solidity of the rock and the wild tumult of wind and water. Both have their place as metaphors for faith.

The image of the rock reminds me of Isaiah's exhortation: "Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord, *look to the rock from which you were hewn*, and to the quarry from which you were dug" (Isaiah 51:1). And it reminds me of the wisdom of Jesus' parable about the house that is built on the rock.

The rushing wind and tumultuous sea remind me of the Holy Spirit – dynamic, freeing and exhilarating, as at Pentecost, bringing about something altogether new. James K Baxter's "Song to the Holy Spirit" evokes a similar sentiment:

*Lord, Holy Spirit  
You blow like the wind in a thousand paddocks  
Inside and outside the fences  
You blow where you wish to blow.*

The gannets, like the Church perhaps, must relate to both these realities. The rock constitutes their place of nurture and shelter, but they cannot stay there. They



Neil Mackenzie

are born to fly, to glide on ever-fresh wind currents and plunge into the sea in search of fish before returning to the rock.

Some might say that the Presbyterian Church, like a number of our sister Churches, is too rock-bound and constrained by tradition, has grown unaccustomed to flying, suffers from institutional inertia and is demoralised after decades of decline. Others might say that in our desperation to somehow reverse institutional decline we are in very real danger of embracing change for the sake of change and losing touch with the rock from which we have been hewn. For these people, T S Eliot's lament, penned back in 1934 ("Choruses from the Rock"), rings true:

*The endless cycle of idea and action,  
endless invention, endless experiment,  
brings knowledge of speech, but not  
of silence;  
knowledge of words, and ignorance of  
the Word.*

### How might we address these concerns?

I'm not convinced there is a simple formula that we can apply. For me, it's about reaffirming our primary focal point. In McCahon's painting this takes the form of the Cross, which holds together in a subtle yet integrated way the elements of rock, wind and sea. Surely the logic of the Cross provides the doctrinal rock upon which our Church stands, as well as its impetus for mission. And if this is indeed the case, can there be a more urgent task for our churches, presbyteries and UDCs than to allow this logic to revitalise our thinking, inform our decisions and shape our ways of being church?

Grace and peace to you all.



**Press Go**



Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

## Press Go gets off the ground

Late last year, the Press Go board announced the first growth initiatives that it would fund. AMANDA WELLS profiles each of these four projects in the following pages. You can find more information, including youtube clips, online at [www.presbyterian.org.nz/pressgo](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/pressgo)

Press Go is about collectively funding growth ideas, and was approved by General Assembly 2008. Parishes and individuals are encouraged to give to Press Go, so that we can keep supporting these initiatives and more like them.

Please send a cheque to Press Go, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, PO Box 9049, Marion Square, Wellington 6141 or contact Brendan Sweeney ([brendan@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:brendan@presbyterian.org.nz) or (04) 801-6000) to talk about giving other options. If you would like to direct your donation specifically to Knox Waitara's project, just let us know.

# Knox Waitara seeks room to grow

**Knox Presbyterian Church in Waitara has tried some lateral approaches to fitting in more people on a Sunday.**

Session clerk Graham Armstrong says one idea was to make the chairs smaller.

"We took all the chairs apart and cut off a couple of inches," meaning several more chairs could fit in each row.

People need to be "reasonably keen" to come on a Sunday morning, says minister the Rev Dennis Flett, because it can be hard to find a seat.

Dennis says when he came to Waitara in 2007, the building was already "quite full".

The church, which was built in 1924, can seat 100 people. Attendance in 2009 has averaged 100 adults each week, up from just over 80 in 2008.

The idea of improving Knox's facilities has been around for about 10 years, Graham says, particularly because its hugely successful children's ministry struggles with the available space.

Having two Sunday services was trialled but wasn't successful, he says, partly because each was too small but mainly because people missed being together.

The church has a strong sense of community, with many members involved in leadership roles for its children's and families' programmes. These draw in a significant proportion of Waitara's population and are making a visible difference in a town that has its share of difficulties.

"Our people are absolutely passionate about Waitara," Dennis says. "We're not so much an entertainment church; we're an involvement church."

As well as a children's programme on Sunday mornings, Dynamite Bay Xtreme clubs for boys and girls aged seven to 11 are run on Tuesday nights, and a teenage youth group meets on Wednesday nights.

About 35 boys are part of the DBX boys group, which is led by men from the church; 30 girls, along with their teenage leaders, are part of the girls group.

Graham is a leader and he says they soon realised that the many boys from Waitara's solo-parent families needed adult male role models. At times there is a waiting list, and boys are sometimes referred from social service agencies.

The youth group is 60-strong, and is a significant influence at Waitara's high school, which has 300 students.

Children and families worker Jennie McCullough says children with leadership potential are identified early on, given training to help develop their potential, and put in leadership roles. They often start coming along to church as well.

Dennis says Knox's success comes "from years of sowing". "I'm getting the benefit of years of what other people did."

His predecessor the Rev Guy Pilkinton made the Sunday worship team teenager-only, which brought the young people into church on a Sunday.

Worship leader Daniel Chapman looks for and trains young people to be part of the team, says Dennis' wife Jenny. "They're not necessarily musicians to start with."

Because young people leave town every year, there are always gaps for new members.

"It's a huge discipleship role. Every year he's spotting people to train into next year's music team," says Jenny.

She says it's really encouraging seeing young people who have come through the church's programmes go away for tertiary study, then come back to settle in Waitara. "One of the visions is to see that generation grow into a strong sense of ownership of the church as adults. We seem to have developed a huge sense of belonging."

The church intentionally has a casual, spontaneous, no-criticism culture, Jenny says, and unanimously endorsed the plans to replace the building.

Dennis says people appear to have little emotional attachment to the existing building: "they said, 'just bulldoze it'".

But the fundraising has caused a few more concerns, he says, with church members aware of the size of the sum needed in relation to their community's ability to give.



Communal meals draw Knox Waitara's community together

While Press Go has granted Knox \$500,000 towards the project, Knox needs to raise another \$1.8 million to meet projected costs.

Dennis says one way that Knox can thank any churches or people who donate is by sharing their ideas and resources, or hosting anyone keen to see their ministries in action.

Graham says the plans aren't about creating some kind of impressive monument.

"We're not into building for the sake of having grand buildings. We just want to reach more people."

At the moment, new people can feel they're not really needed because the church is already too full, he says. "They can feel a bit intimidated by everyone being so close together."

The existing structure is an earthquake risk, with no reinforcing in the concrete. Any attempts to enlarge it would require expensive remedial work, which means this option isn't viable, Graham says.

In 2008, a "development dream team" was set up to investigate possibilities, which were limited by the fact that much of Waitara is leasehold land. The best option was a new building on the existing site, using the properties recently bought by the church on either side.

The elders have set the ambitious goal of completing the building by 2011.

"By building, we would be making a huge statement," Dennis says, "we'd be saying 'we believe in Waitara'".

But he also says it's important to remember that the building is only a tool. "I don't want to see building become our focus. It's a servant not the master."

The plans include a new auditorium that will seat 300, a large youth hall, other spaces for the children's ministries, and a large lounge and foyer.

Other community groups would be able to use the multipurpose facility.

Graham says a new building would mean bigger groups and more effective ministry.

"The youth group likes physical games. We just can't do that because of lack of space."

Other programmes that Jennie runs include the "Rainbow play group" for under fives, which sees 50 children and their mums come along every week, nearly all of whom are otherwise unconnected with the church. Many of the children go on to attend the DBX programmes.

Elder Ian Finer says having a paid worker has made a huge difference to the children's ministry. "We've always had a lot of work with children and young people, but that's really stepped up a level in the past couple of years."

Jenny says by the time that the young leaders start in high school, "they're used to leading and taking ownership".

"They see school as their mission field."

About 20 people have been baptised, many of them young people, in the past two years, with baptism services held about four times a year.

The youth "own" their programmes, Dennis says. "Jennie gives the structures, but they make the decisions; they're treated as adults."

But Knox isn't just about young people. Dennis' "date with Den" sees him regularly gathering with the older members of the congregation for a plate of date scones and an opportunity to ask questions about any topic.

The church is always looking for new ways to fulfil its mission to its community, he says. Every day Dennis emails out a couple of verses, along with an email news update once a week. "We want to develop that area of communication."

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**According to the 2006 census, Waitara's population is just over 6000**

**Nearly 50 percent of the population has no formal qualifications**

**More than 55 percent of the population earn \$20,000 a year or less**

**29 percent of families are solo-parent families**

**Waitara's unemployment rate is twice the rate of Taranaki as a whole. Most people with jobs commute to work in New Plymouth, about 20km away**

**All the schools are decile 1 or 2**

# Church planting for beginners

**The Rev Jim Wallace says church planting has become a lost art.**

**The growth of regional and gathered churches, which see people travelling large distances to attend a specific service, has taken the focus off churches that serve a particular locality, he says.**

“But there’s something distinctive about parish churches that exist to serve a community.”

Jim, who’s minister of Bethlehem Community Church in Tauranga, says church planting primarily means creating links and opportunities.

“The church has lost contact with the community. It’s about looking for ways in which we can rebuild that contact so it’s a positive experience.”

Bethlehem will receive \$85,000 in Press Go funding to support and train someone in church planting.

The person selected will spend a year at Bethlehem learning from their experience as well as developing their own projects.

Jim says he will encourage the person to visit and spend time with people in the community – “not church people” – before taking any action.

“Church planting is about building relationships, not just about programmes.”



The Rev Jim Wallace

The position is fully funded, with the proviso that the church planter is subsequently bonded to the Presbyterian Church for five years.

“Maybe then a strong church will sponsor them into a situation; that’s why we need strong churches.”

The planter will also need to develop a team around them, rather than attempting to start a church single-handed, he says.

Jim came to Bethlehem in 2002, and the church has grown from 19 to 200 people during that time. In 2008, stage one of a purpose-built facility was opened, but numbers on Sundays are already stretching this capacity.

The new building has given the church a huge profile, Jim says. It’s highly visible, with modern, open architecture, and on a road with significant passing traffic,

“A lot of people just come in off the street.”

It’s the church’s responsibility to make that initial visit a positive one, Jim says.

“We try to make sure the service is welcoming and warm.”

After realising that many people were coming along for a few weeks then not returning, despite Bethlehem’s overall numbers continuing to increase, the church took another look at its approach to welcoming.

“We’ve got a big front door but also a big back door.”

A new ministry team has been formed, with its welcomers greeting people on Sundays but also taking responsibility for following up with them during the week and helping connect them with the church’s activities.

“We realised that we needed to establishing a connecting ministry.”

The most effective welcomers are newcomers, Jim says, “because they want to make friends”. Those who are part of the welcoming ministry need to be prepared to open their circle of friends to new people, “if there’s a connection there”.

Even though the congregation has outgrown its new space, it’s “not the right time for us to build our second stage,” Jim says. They are only two years into their building programme, which has cost \$1.2 million so far. Stage two, which would create a hall with capacity for 350 people, will probably be built in 2011.

But the possibility of cooperation with a neighbouring Presbyterian church means progress could leap ahead to stage four this year. Omokoroa Community Church needs some space for an op shop, which would give Bethlehem the chance to construct a standalone building with space for youth ministry.

“It would be a win-win situation,” Jim says. “People from the congregation are already keen to get involved.”

Bethlehem employed a youth and children’s worker early last year, and has plans to focus on the intermediate age group in 2010. Jim says “life groups” for this age group will run on a Friday night before the older youth group session, rather than during the Sunday service. “This will give them chance to invite their friends.”

Bethlehem uses letter box drops to publicise its variety of programmes, and Jim says these need to be done at least four times a year to have any effect.

One success has been movie nights, held every third Sunday with about 25 people regularly attending to watch a film and discuss it afterwards. Jim says the films are usually secular, and people often bring their friends along.



Bethlehem Community Church sits alongside a busy main road

Amanda Wells

# Crossroads finally realises building vision

**Crossroads' journey to a new, purpose-built facility has been long and sometimes painful.**

The church, midway between Auckland, Thames and Hamilton, sold off several of its smaller worship centres, raising the ire of some communities and generating some negative publicity.

But the Rev Steve Millward says Crossroads, like other churches in the same situation, "needed to be smart".

"If we don't rationalise, we face extinction".

For 30 years, the church's largest congregation has been meeting in Mangatangi's community hall, where a lack of permanent signage makes it invisible to the community, Steve says.

Work on the new facility, also in Mangatangi, started in October 2009, with completion due in June.

Prior to construction, the church went through a significant consultation process, meeting with neighbours and groups that the district council saw as interested parties.

Session clerk Bill Millar says it gave them a chance to sit down and explain the church's vision.

Bill's son David, who's been monitoring the project for the church, says the construction has generated significant interest in the

community. "The site manager says there's not a day goes by when there isn't someone having a good look."

The project had ambitious beginnings: when planning and fundraising work started, the congregation was only 50 people.

Bill says initially they were looking at a \$400,000 building and a massive mortgage. Instead they have ended up funding a \$2 million project without huge debt. Press Go has granted Crossroads a loan of \$300,000, to be repaid over 6-10 years.

The new facility is on a 12-acre site and will seat 200 people, with expansion space for another 50, and includes a café and dedicated areas for other ministries.

"The question has been asked, 'do we really need something as flash as that?'," Steve says. But the building sends a potent message: "Before anything is said, they'll say 'wow, you guys did this, and you aren't that big - maybe we can do it.'"

While the church described itself as evangelical, he says, "that wasn't growing us". So after thinking more deeply about their environment, they brought in couches, pot plants and a coffee machine.

"If people don't apply their theology to building, music and dress, then they stay placed in the 20th century and become irrelevant very quickly. It's amazing how those things help people."

And then Crossroads started to grow. "For eight years, it was virtually the same people every week. In the last four years, we're getting a trickle of people every week checking us out."

Attendance at services grew to an average of 80 people in June 2009, and 90 in December. About 120 people are involved in the church altogether, Steve says.

The carpark is nearly full at 10am, with people coming for coffee before the 10.30am service; a stark contrast to several years ago when Steve struggled to start on time because of latecomers.

Elder Catherine Bentley says the Sunday coffee and gathering has become a much-needed focal point for the community.

At the moment, about 25 children come along every week, meeting in a very small space, with as much time setting up and packing down as with the children. At one point, Sunday school was being held in a van outside the church.

Youth church meets on a Friday night, and includes worship and a message as well as games and food. It has been held jointly with St James' Presbyterian in Pukekohe, attracting about 70 young people in total, half from each church.

Part of Crossroads' vision is to help other small churches grow.

The church is also planning conferences and youth events, such as its successful youth music festival Faith Fest, and to offer training such as parents' courses.

Steve says events at Crossroads attract a big turn out "because we're within an hour of Auckland".

A "Global Positioning" prayer lunch held in late 2009 attracted 55 people from about 15 churches, and Crossroads' goal is to get 100 people attending twice a year.

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Construction of Crossroads' new church is well underway



# New name and new vision for Welcome Bay

**Welcome Bay Presbyterian Church has turned away from a traumatic past towards a future with huge potential.**

The Rev Rhys Pearson says the opportunity is unique in New Zealand, combining a large piece of highly visible land, a very functional building, and a rapidly growing community where people are looking to make social connections.

“This is a unique and unusual opportunity for growth.”

Press Go has granted the church, now known as the “Light House”, \$250,000 over three years to establish a self-supporting ministry. A full-time minister will be appointed, in consultation with the presbytery and the Press Go Board, and the church will come under the oversight of a neighbouring large parish. In February, Mike Urtley was employed as stated supply minister, with a view to calling him once his licensing has been completed.

Rhys has been significantly involved in Welcome Bay during 2008, being appointed by the Council of Assembly to negotiate with Welcome Bay Community Church, which had been occupying the church buildings but left in July 2009.

The Rev Iain Dickson, who’s the church’s ministry convenor, says in order to avoid confusion, a new name has been chosen

from its history, “Light House – church on the hill”.

In July, Iain and the Rev Tony Hepburn were appointed by the presbytery to get services up and running. “It’s amazing how far we’ve travelled since then.”

Up to 35 people have been coming along, with a core of five families who were part of WBCC but chose to stay.

Rhys says these people are very positive about wanting to rebuild and have put aside any bitterness about past. “They’re saying, ‘we’ve moved on, we’ve got another communion table now, we’ve built another cross and put it on the wall; we’re ready to go again’.”

Facilities include a kitchen, hall and lounge, and the sanctuary can hold 120 people.

Iain says the church is very clear about wanting to make any changes necessary to attract new people and younger families, and will be supportive of a minister who brings new ideas.

The new minister won’t be left isolated. He will be networked with other ministers in the area and work very closely with one larger church, being based in their offices and part of the ministry team.

“That’s part of the vision for this call.”

“It’s a fantastic opportunity to do the imaginative stuff.”

Iain says the small congregation is ready to get behind its new minister. “They realise that they’re in a church plant.”

At the end of the three years, Rhys says, Welcome Bay will need to stand on its own feet. “We expect to see a dynamic, self-supporting, worshipping community. The potential to achieve that vision is huge.”

**The western Bay of Plenty is booming**

## Every week:

- » 135 people move there
- » 30 new houses are built
- » 51 new jobs are created

**The population is predicted to double by 2051.**

### A complex history

The church at 240 Welcome Bay Road was planted in the 1970s by neighbouring St Enoch’s Presbyterian, whose members saw the area’s potential for growth.

“We talked to some of the older people at St Enoch’s, and they sacrificed to make this possible,” Rhys says. “It was a very significant step for them.”

Early services were held in doctor’s rooms and a school hall before a land swap was completed with the Ministry of Works in 1980 for the current site. The fledgling congregation constructed a building, helped by a grant from the Presbyterian Church. The church, which had adopted the name Welcome Bay Community Church, became a cooperating venture in 1981, as part of the strong contemporary tide towards ecumenism, and flourished for some time. But when a minister was convicted of paedophilia, the parish split. In 1998, the Anglicans and Methodists withdrew, leaving WBCC as a Presbyterian charge once again.

The Presbyterian Church gave significant funding during this difficult period but at the same time the church began to emphasise the “community” part of its name and distance itself from the denomination. Over a number of years, there were many attempts to reach a compromise solution. But eventually the insistence of the WBCC leadership that they were not Presbyterian meant they were asked by Bay of Plenty presbytery to vacate the property. When they did this in July 2009, they stripped the building bare.

Rhys says he remains sad that a compromise solution proved impossible. “No matter what we did, there was no way we could get a change.”

WBCC, which has retained a congregation of about 80 people, is meeting in a school hall 1km away.



The church occupies a prime site

Amanda Wells



# New families help to transform St James'

**The arrival of a number of Filipino families in Palmerston has added a new dimension to his church, says the Rev Bobby Kusilifu. And when their presence combined with increasing attendance by other young families, the church experienced a time of significant growth.**

“Before 2005, St James’ Church [Palmerston/Dunback Presbyterian Parish] wasn’t what you would call multicultural or growing; ours was an older congregation mostly of New Zealand European and Scottish descent.”

“Now we have Filipino families attending our church, and other local families with children are also coming along; we have become a youthful church. We are very thankful to have the younger folk as part of our church family.”

The arrival of new people from a different culture has been both exciting and challenging for St James’, Bobby says. “Over time, folk can get used to things being done the same way, so to experience so much change has been a bit much for some: but on the whole, things are good.”

The reason the Filipino community chose to join St James is, Bobby says, due to the hospitality the church showed to one of the first Filipino workers to arrive in the region, Ramon Quijano. Palmerston is well represented by the main denominations and each Sunday Ramon attended a different church, looking for a faith family that he, his wife and five children could belong to. Ramon chose St James’ because the congregation was tolerant and welcoming and the minister had personal experience of living away from his birth culture.

Bobby says the church has assisted the Filipino community to settle into the area “by doing what we can to help them adjust to life in New Zealand, such as offering help with housing and directing them to where they need to go for different things”. The church now reaches out into the community to help many others who are new to the area.

St James’ has other forms of community outreach; in 2004, Bobby’s wife Lois and Sally-Anne White started an afterschool



Palmerston’s Quijano family (left to right): Joy (16), Hope, RV (6), Ray (18), Ramon, Faith (8) and Hope, also called Len (15).

programme called Wacky Wednesday (later renamed Funtastic Friday). While St James already had other children’s ministries, Bobby says Lois “saw a gap no one was filling” in providing something for children after school, as well as reaching out to young families and helping them “not be afraid of church folk”. At first only three children came along, now there are 20 to 30 attending, most of whom do not come from church families.

The programme has 12 women from the church that help out, Bobby says. The Funtastic Friday team is led by Daphne Begley and Mary Harvie, and Daphne says at first parents were concerned the programme was about proselytising, “until they came and saw it’s about children having fun, learning new skills and building relationships between children and adults. Now we have parents that help out”.

Funtastic Friday is so successful it has won the TrustPower education and child youth development award twice, in 2007 and 2008; and in 2009 the programme was awarded runner-up. The award money has paid for the running of the programme, Daphne says. “It’s free to the community and we would like to keep it that way, so we are very grateful to TrustPower, our church

family who support us in prayer and with start-up funds and the parents that help with materials”.

Despite not winning the award in 2009, the programme was not down financially last year as Ramon’s son Ray Quijano, 18, who is part of the church’s youth leadership team, won the inaugural TrustPower Waihemo Youth award and donated half his award to Funtastic Friday. He decided to give the other half to his mother.

Ray won the award for his volunteering, including helping out in the East Otago High School office and canteen, teaching drums to younger students, being a reading tutor and a peer group leader.

“I was really astonished to be awarded as I wasn’t aware that I’d helped people; these are my hobbies. Plus it does me good to help someone without wanting anything back and to do things outside of my comfort zone,” he says.

A career helping children is something Ray is now working towards. This year he hopes to study at the University of Otago, to gain entry to the Medical School and eventually specialise as a paediatrician.

By Angela Singer Spanz

# Grandparents' hidden sacrifice takes toll

The financial, physical and emotional burden placed on grandparents who raise their grandchildren is a huge, hidden problem in our society, says Flo Clarke, a Presbyterian Support Otago Family Works counsellor who runs the Dunedin-based Grandy's Group, which is a support group for grandparents raising grandchildren.

"People do not realise the extreme pressures these grandparents are under and the issues they have to cope with".

The Families Commission reports that the number of grandchildren in the full-time care of grandparents is increasing. In 2007, Work & Income released figures showing that in excess of 15,000 children were receiving the Unsupported Child Benefit, which is a benefit paid to grandparents who have grandchildren in their full-time care.

The Grandy's Group began 10 years ago to meet "a need that was not being met", Flo says. Without any advertising, word of mouth brought 16 to 18 grandparents to meetings. The group, facilitated by Flo and Rayleen Hubac, meets for two hours once a month, and currently 15 grandparents regularly attend.

Because of demand, the group is only open to grandparents who have 24-hour care of their grandchild. "It's a place that they can safely share their worries and they can also phone each other outside of the group if they choose to."

Flo says the group is the only opportunity most of the grandparents have to share their problems with other people in the same situation. "Many of the grandchildren are pre-school and the grandparents find themselves isolated at home; or the grandchildren are school-

aged but the age gap with other parents is too large to bridge." Most of the group's members are over 70.

Counselling is also offered when appropriate, and referrals can be made to other Presbyterian Support services.

Flo says that the group is involved with advocacy, and has arranged for WINZ and IRD to come talk about money issues, as well as lawyers to discuss legal issues and fees.

The grandparents in the Grandy's Group feel ignored and unsupported by the government, Flo says. "MPs say the right things about how grandparents raising grandchildren need more support - but then nothing happens." Through necessity, the group's grandparents are very resourceful and "there is lots of sharing", including helping each other out where possible when they experience health issues.

Whilst many grandparents take on the full-time care of their grandchildren reluctantly, there are others, Flo says, who are pleased to "make a difference in their grandchildren's lives - or to have a second chance if they didn't get it right the first time".

More than half the children in a 2009 study of grandparents raising grandchildren in New Zealand were reported as having serious physical and psychological problems as a result of the abuse and neglect they had before coming into their grandparents care. However, 86 percent reported significant improvements over time, which study author and social work consultant Jill Worrall says can be directly attributed to the stability of care and the resilience and commitment of the grandparents.

Cecilia\* is a member of Grandy's Group, and her story is typical of those grandparents identified in the study. It began when she



was woken in the middle of the night by a call from government agency Children Youth and Family asking if she would take three children into her home for protection. “My husband Ron and I said ‘yes’, because what else could you say? Then CYF told us that the three little ones were our grandchildren aged two, three and four, and that they had been abused by our daughter’s partner.”

At the time Cecilia was in her mid 60s and her husband in his early 70s. Their relationship with their daughter, the children’s mother, was strained due to “both her and her partner’s drug use”, Cecilia says.

The year they took their grandchildren into their home was, says Cecilia, “a nightmare of family group meetings, dealings with police and CYF, and attending court, where I was put in the dock and given a terrible time, cross-examined like I had committed a crime; it was degrading”.

“We were given guardianship of the children and our daughter blamed us for taking them in and was very abusive towards us. We were horrified that she chose to remain with the partner that abused the children; we received death threats from him”.

“The grandchildren were very frightened and screamed if you left their sight for a moment. Their behavioural problems got them into trouble at school. They went on to have years of counselling.”

At a time when Cecilia and Ron most needed support from their family, friends and church, they say they felt abandoned. “During the first few years of having the children, we were both quite ill, and the emotional and financial stress made it worse. We were living frugally before the grandchildren came, so although we really needed a break we couldn’t afford childcare. Even one night off

would have helped us. Our friends were mainly from the church we attended and were all older like us, in their 60s and 70s, and they no longer visited us because we had these noisy little ones running around. They just stopped visiting and returning our calls.”

Forming friendships with the mothers and fathers at the kindy and schools the children attended was not an option. “Even though we tried hard to befriend the parents of our grandchildren’s friends, it never happened. They were very nice to us and would chat outside the school but that’s as far as it went, as they were all much younger. They weren’t interested in coming to our home for a meal or in inviting us to their home.”

Adding to their loneliness and isolation was the response of their other adult children, who distanced themselves, seemingly jealous of what they saw as “special treatment” given to the three grandchildren. “We have since learnt that this reaction isn’t uncommon, but we were very disappointed. Our adult children accused us of spending all our time with the three grandchildren and not enough time with their children, our other grandchildren. They resented the money we spent on the grandchildren we were raising. They didn’t understand that the relationship we had with the three we took in had changed; we were no longer their grandparents, we were their parents.”

Watching their health and financial situation deteriorate was hard, says Cecilia. “You don’t want to be resentful but we know that Ron and I have lost so much time together. We miss what we worked all our lives for; time together relaxing without the stress of working a 40-hour week.”

Cecilia says CYF could have lessened their financial stress considerably by not making them fight for the Unsupported Child Benefit. “I think they resisted giving us the allowance for some time as they did not know how long the children would stay with us. But we found it very tough to live as a family of five on the married pension, so we were borrowing. It was very frustrating. When we did receive the allowance, it was a help but we still had to and have to find money out of our pension for the extras it doesn’t cover.”

Cecilia says that if she and Ron knew then what they know now, they would still have taken their grandchildren in and raised them. “We may not look it but they have kept us very young in outlook, and we have beaten some serious health problems because there was no way we were leaving our grandchildren before they were raised”.

Today life is a little easier, Cecilia says, thanks to the ongoing support they have received from Grandy’s Group and from the church that she and Ron now attend. “We were going to a Presbyterian church for many years but because we were not supported in a journey that was not of our making, we joined another denomination. We are now part of a very understanding congregation that has other grandparents raising grandchildren. Instead of being a burden to our church, we and our grandchildren are welcomed”.

Flo Clarke says that churches have a real opportunity to help grandparents raising grandchildren in their congregations and communities. “Ministers could facilitate a monthly grandparent’s group similar to ours - but be aware that the meetings can be very emotional, so have extra support available. Congregations can help financially with one-off expenses such as a large winter power bill, school stationery and uniforms.”

*\*names have been changed*

By Angela Singer **Spanz**

# Students graduating from the School of Ministry in

# 2010



**Brent Richardson**

I'm Brent Richardson and this is my wife Catherine and our two daughters, Emma (15) and Caitlin (13). Prior to commencing my internship, I spent eight years as children's pastor at Hornby Presbyterian Community Church in Christchurch. My ministry strengths are preaching and leading contemporary expressions of worship. My heart is to see the Church as a place of spiritual nurture for all generations. I believe the best years of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand are ahead of us, and I look forward to serving our Lord through this branch of his Church.



**Martin Fey**

My journey towards ordained ministry will see me complete my internship at Kaikorai Presbyterian Church in 2010. I have already spent a diverse and interesting year at East Taieri Church in Mosgiel. My background is in education and libraries, and I completed my foundational theological studies at Auckland University in 2007.

I am married to Andrea, a registered nurse, and we have two children, Amy and Rowan. We have been living in Dunedin since mid-2008, after leaving Auckland for a change of lifestyle and a new adventure together. Our home church is St Andrew's in Howick.



**Matt Chapman**

I am married to Allyson, and our daughter is Tori. We love God, family time, music, and sport. We are currently based at St Columba Presbyterian Church in Botany, Auckland, where I am a ministry intern student. After training at the Excel School of Performing Arts and spending time in the band Detour 180, I completed a BMin at Laidlaw College. I am now one year into my internship, and excited about serving in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Allyson is an outstanding primary school teacher, and Tori loves dancing and playing the drums.



**Nyalle Paris**

I am a second-year intern and based at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Invercargill. I'm married to Sophia and we have a son named William. My background is in educational administration, formerly being an assistant principal at Mt Anglem College, and I hold a Bachelor of Theology (Hons) degree from the University of Otago. My motto for ministry is encapsulated in the words of Micah 6:8. I am thoroughly enjoying the spiritual formation of the KCML internship and count it a joy and a privilege to serve God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



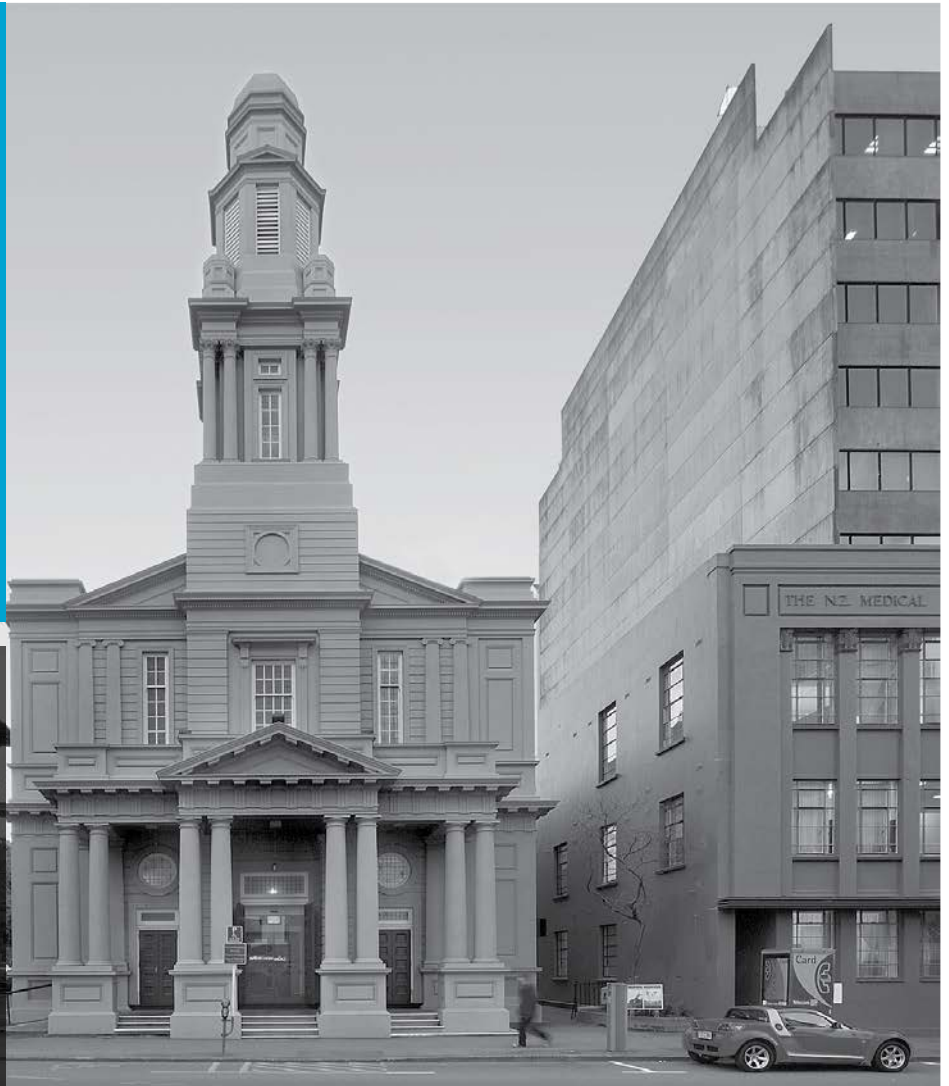
**Simon Cornwall**

I am married to Alison and our children are Christopher (14), and our daughters Leigh (21) and Erin (23), who are both married.

My internship is at St Peter's Tauranga, where I have worked for the last 11 years. My passions are helping draw people closer to God through preaching and outreach, plus building a community in which people feel they can belong. Over the first year of the internship, my understanding of the theological and historical roots of the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions have been strengthened, better equipping me to face the future as a minister of our Church.

# St Andrew's on the Terrace finds funds to save its building

When the Rev Margaret Mayman arrived at St Andrew's on The Terrace, Wellington, as its new minister, she found that the elegant old church was an earthquake risk, the congregation were sitting near crumbling concrete and the building had been given a deadline of just 10 years to be strengthened and made earthquake safe.



“Not the best start! The church building was a hazard but no one had mentioned this to me prior,” Margaret says. “We had buckets in the church when it rained. It was demoralising. The risk was that after the 10 years were up, we would be told we couldn't be there. We were faced with ‘fix it up or it will fall down’.”

Margaret launched herself into a fundraising feasibility study. “We found the perception of the church was that it has lots of money and doesn't need any more”.

St Andrew's raised \$500,000 towards the necessary restoration work – but was still \$1 million short of the stage one target. “We had to sell the Crossways building or we would not have had enough for the work. It was a tough decision. We delayed the sale for a year so that the Crossways Trust could fundraise. They could not meet the price and the building was sold. Ultimately, it is not the church's role to run community centres that are not connected with worshipping communities,” Margaret says.

With the funds from the sale of Crossways, St Andrew's was able to completely restore the church building, including replacing the

roof; carrying out earthquake strengthening, concrete repair and treatment; and making a sanctuary area for performance and worship (a loan allowed work to be started in 2008).

In 2007, the congregation had begun the church's inner refurbishment, donating new heaters, new seats and the funds for the painting of the church door.

Margaret says that St Andrew's has received generous support at their restoration fundraising events, such as the “Art on Slate” fundraiser that used the church's old slate roof tiles as artists' canvases, fundraising concerts, and most recently a Fair Trade sale of artisan-made fashion bags from Cambodia. “Through events we raised \$150,000 towards stage two of the restoration”.

The restoration fund has also been boosted by donations from “people who aren't members of our congregation but want to support what we are doing as a welcoming church”.

“Since stage one of the restoration was completed, we have seen our congregation

grow, with new people coming every week. Our free concerts and lectures are popular now that we have a good sound system, heat and comfortable seats, and our walls regularly host exhibitions of art with a religious theme. We are involved in the life of Wellington, in reconciliation, with refugees, peace activities, Trade Aid and ecological issues.”

In January 2010, St Andrew's began the second stage, which involves replacing the dilapidated wooden building that houses the office, toilets and green room. “We are making the buildings disability-friendly, and updating the hall, kitchen and upstairs offices.”

The final stage will be the demolition of the oldest part of the building – a hideous lean-to entrance.

Margaret says she is looking forward to the day the buildings no longer require so much of her energy. “I haven't really “known” the church outside of renovation. I imagine life will be quite delightful.”

By Angela Singer [Spanz](#)

# Gardens grow community connections

A new community garden in Masterton has strengthened connections with local families and helped a problem with late night drinking on the church grounds.



East Taieri's fruitful community garden

The Rev Geraldine Coates of St Luke's Union Church says the garden has been a joint project, mainly with the Masterton Christian Child Care Programme, which the church has supported since it was set up in 1982. The programme offers socially and economically disadvantaged families low-cost childcare, social welfare assistance and education programmes for parents.

Geraldine says the idea of a garden came in early 2009 in response to the economic downturn, from a "poverty action group" to which all community leaders and social agencies were invited.

She realised that the strip of lawn behind the church, which was only used for shortcuts or illicit weekend drinking, was a potential site.

The congregation had already given up the front lawn of the church to the childcare centre, so there were some reservations. But after discussion they approved the project, with parishioners and MCCP families working together to create the garden.

Many other groups have become involved, including Rotary, through connections within the MCCP and the congregation.

The initial planting was funded by the Wairarapa District Health Board, as part of its healthy families initiative.

In late November 2009, the garden was "full of cabbages and cauliflowers and beans". The produce is given to the 40 families who come to the child care centre, Geraldine says, and future excesses will be given to the local foodbank.

As well as giving the families access to fresh vegetables, it helps the children learn to eat them through being involved in the growing process, she says.

"Many of the families at the Centre live in rented accommodation and move frequently, so do not have the opportunity otherwise to grow their own food."

The St James' congregation has about 70 people at worship each week, and are now very supportive of the garden, which along with the childcare centre has created a strong visual statement, Geraldine says.

"The public can actually see the church being involved in this project. I think that's very important."

She says the garden has also provided a space where parents from the childcare centre and people from the congregation can work alongside each other. And it has given a chance to involve the fathers of the children, who took an active part in the setting-up process

"To 'help the planet' we have also tried to keep the garden as organic as possible, through a worm farm and collection of rain water and composting."

The well-established community garden at East Taieri Church, in Mosgiel, has been driven by congregation member Ruth Rivett-Cuthbert.

Five years ago, Ruth moved to Mosgiel from West Otago, where she had had a big garden, to a much smaller space. She says she "needed some gardening" and noticed some land below the church. This area had previously been used as part of an agricultural training centre, was fenced and had a shade house, although it had become very overgrown.

The "ET Cares Community Garden" became a new ministry of the church in 2005, with a committee of 20 people involved.

The area, which measures about 25 metres by 10 metres, was cleared. The initial crop of potatoes went to the foodbank, which continues to receive all surplus produce.

In the first year, children helped out with the planting, with sometimes "higgledy-

piggledy" results, Ruth says, but some of their mums have remained involved.

"What we really wanted was people to come and work in the garden and encourage young members of the church to learn about it and use the produce."

Broadbeans, rhubarb, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuces, silverbeet, corn, leeks and tomatoes were growing in the "very full" garden late last year.

The produce is left at the church entrance on Sundays for people to help themselves. Ruth says small packages of different veges are made up, which older people find helpful.

Some produce is also harvested on a Tuesday for the midweek Mainly Music parents.

In 2009, part of the garden was extended and fenced off for Arahina, which is a Christian training centre that provides alternative education services, community service to local public schools, budget advice, internships and counselling. Arahina brings children after school and teaches them to garden; they also plan to use their produce for cooking classes.

Ruth says about 10 people from the original committee are still involved, but they are trying to recruit some more volunteers at the moment.

She describes the group as "really enthusiastic". "They're wonderful at coming down in their spare time, we just want a few more of them." While a number of the gardeners are retired, there are also some younger people involved.

The garden has small budget from the church that funds seed purchases, with Ruth raising the seedlings at home.

Next year they hope to start saving seeds from the garden for future planting.

By Amanda Wells [Spanz](#)

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# Electronic newsletters offer benefits beyond the obvious paper-savings, according to churches that use them.

**During the past couple of years, many churches have started supplementing their Sunday newsheet with an email, and some have stopped printing weekly newsletters altogether.**

The Rev Barry Ayers, minister of Pohutukawa Coast Presbyterian in South Auckland, says email serves a slightly different purpose from the traditional Sunday newsletter, which his church has retained.

Electronic communication's instant nature makes it a good vehicle for reminders or special requests during the week, or urgent news, Barry says.

Pohutukawa Coast began using an electronic newsletter about two years ago, he says, when he realised that many people used email and were happy to receive information this way.

"It created another way of communicating with people alongside everything else we do."

Other benefits include the ability to send colour photos, to provide links to information on the Internet, and to keep in touch with people every week even if they don't make it every Sunday.

"More and more people are becoming electronically based in their worlds, so we think this whole area can be carefully and creatively managed in the future."

Wadestown Presbyterian in Wellington started putting out a weekly email news in 2006, says minister the Rev Sharon Ensor.

During a series on caring for the environment in 2008, the church experimented with stopping its weekly newsheet, recognising the wastage of paper. Instead, about 15 printed copies of the email news were left out for those without Internet access to pick up on a Sunday morning. These also have an abbreviated version of the order of service printed on the back.

The church has also started to circulate its longer bi-monthly newsletter by email, as well as making it available on its website, although a printed version continues to be produced for those who prefer it.

"After a recent 'drive' to get more people receiving it online, we have reduced the number of printed copies by about a third."

Benefits have been the immediate nature of email and the saving in paper and printing costs, Sharon says, as well as the fact it "helps the planet".

St Andrew's on the Terrace in Wellington started using an electronic newsletter six years ago, says minister the Rev Dr Margaret Mayman.

People can sign up for the email from the church's website. Margaret says many people who are associated with St Andrew's

don't attend every week. "It keeps us in touch with them and draws them back in."

The printed newsletter has changed from monthly to a quarterly magazine, with longer articles.

Margaret says the response from the congregation has been very positive, and the handful of people who don't have email can pick up or be posted a hard copy.

The main benefit is the ability to share information at short notice, she says, as well as including links to the Internet for people who want to find out more.

"I usually try to send e-news fortnightly, unless there is a lot going on and then it might be monthly."

St Columba @ Botany's the Rev Andrew Norton writes a weekly email called 4U, which is more of a reflection than a newsletter.

Andrew began the weekly email eight years ago, about the time that the church was shifting location, because he felt he had become less accessible. "So I thought I would write something in a personal vein, to keep in touch".

The newsletter is received by 700 people, about two thirds of whom are part of his congregation. Andrew says he gets about three emailed responses to the email every week, though it is mentioned much more often in conversation.

The content and the format hasn't really changed since its inception, he says. 4U was a new idea, rather than a replacement for an existing paper-based publication, and St Columba still circulates a paper newsletter on Sundays.

One problem with 4U is maintaining the subscription base, Andrew says. "If I was starting again, I would go straight for a web-based or managed-email service."

The church also sends out an email about its Myanmar project, called *Mingalaba*, which you can read more about elsewhere in this issue of *Spanz*.

Andrew says St Columba is embarking on a review of its communications, after a survey of the congregation indicated a need for improvement.

He says electronic communication can encounter exactly the same problems as printed material. "Just because something is in an email or newsletter, it doesn't mean that people have read it."

The quality of content is becoming far more important, he says, because of the volume of communication that people receive. Unless it's compelling, they hit the delete key.

"The most effective form of communication is still person to person."

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Microsoft Outlook can cause problems if you want to send to a large number of people. Often if you send to more than 20 email addresses, the email will go straight into your recipient's spam folder or be automatically deleted by their service provider. Get around this by sending the emails in smaller batches or using a low-cost online service, which will also give you a choice of design templates for your email. We use [www.campaignmonitor.com](http://www.campaignmonitor.com) to send Bush Telegraph and all our other email newsletters.

By Amanda Wells *Spanz*



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- >> **Candour** – the journal for ministers and leaders, sent in the middle of every month
- >> **Presbyterian People** – news and advice on employment-related issues from our Personnel Advisor, sent bimonthly
- >> **Council News** – a summary of the latest Council of Assembly meeting, sent out the week after each of the quarterly meetings
- >> **Press Go Update** – regular news about Press Go initiatives and their progress, as well as funding decisions

>> **Pastoral Email** – an email for ministers from Assembly Executive Secretary the Rev Martin Baker, sent sporadically in response to particular news or events.

>> **Reform of Presbyteries news** – an occasional update from the Presbytery Reform team on progress around the country

You can sign up to receive most of these emails at [www.presbyterian.org.nz/publications](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/publications) or you can drop an email to [amanda@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:amanda@presbyterian.org.nz) listing which you would like to receive.

We also send out other emails promoting particular events, including youth events like Going Further or Connect. Generally these are sent specifically to ministers and session clerks - if you're not receiving these emails, please let us know.



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# Club takes Invercargill girls away from the ordinary

**For the past decade the Rev Heather Kennedy, a minister at First Church, Invercargill, has quietly been teaching, entertaining and encouraging young girls in Invercargill.**

First Church established the girls' club to ensure there was a club accessible to all girls, whatever their families' financial circumstance. First Church covers all the costs, with no fees and no uniforms, though those who can afford it pay \$1 towards activities.

The club in the past has had up to 25 members. At the moment, 14 girls aged five to 10 years attend, none of them being from church-going families. "They hear about us through friends of friends," Heather says. "There's only myself and two helpers who are older ladies running the club, so we cannot take on too many girls."

To make room for new girls, members have to leave when they are near to 11 years old. "There's lots of clubs and groups they can join, including the church youth group".

The ongoing success of the girls' club is down to "a programme that is less structured," Heather says. "We try to do

lots of different things; there might be craft, an outing, music, drama or games. We follow the Church calendar and always do something to mark Easter and Christmas, and we also mark other days."

One such day is All Hallows Eve, when Heather and the girls can be found among the gravestones, candles in hand. "We've gone to the cemetery for two years now. The society we live in can treat the subject of death very unnaturally. For me, as someone who ministers at funerals, the opportunity to treat death in a healthy, balanced and open way is not to be missed".

Heather says the girls take a wreath with them and lay it on the grave of someone they know who has recently died. "Someone will spot a gravestone and say, 'I know that person'. The girls are surprised when they find contemporary gravestones made of glass or in the shape of a bike."

Outings are the girls' favourite activity, says Heather "and I enjoy taking them into the community as the little ambassadors of First Church". The girls visit a rest home that Heather holds services at and take chocolate, fudge and biscuits they have made at the club.

"Cooking is always popular and can be combined with a game; the girls make pancakes then have a pancake race."

Fundraising is another activity the girls are involved in. After a visit from "Bruce C Gull", a seagull-costumed man who came to talk to the club about environmental issues, the girls decided they would sponsor Flight, a king parrot in the Queen's Park Aviary. Each year the girls have sold

firewood and pine cones, sold cheese rolls (the delicious rolled-up South Island version) and performed a mid-Winter play about Christmas trees to raise funds for the Aviary.

The importance of caring for the environment is something one of the Girls' Club helpers, who works for the city council, has been sharing. The girls, including the five year olds, have been learning how to recycle.

"Recycling wasn't something we would have done as an activity with the girls 10 years ago," Heather says, but the strength of the First Church girls' club is its ability to evolve.

"In the past we used to give the girls a snack because they would come to club hungry but we don't see hungry kids anymore so we cut that back to just giving them a drink and a biscuit". Heather says that the club needs to stay flexible and to listen to what the girls want from it, so that they can meet their changing needs and evolve intentionally. "If we are hearing the girls correctly, then I think that soon we will be finding ways to connect more with the schools.

"This year we will form a SuperKidz Club and invite both boys and girls aged between 6 and 12 years to attend. We hope this will include more Sunday School members and children from Invercargill Middle School, with whom we are forming an 'Adopt a School' relationship. The new SuperKidz Club will attract more helpers from within our congregation."

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



**The girls make chocolates for the local resthome**

# Cooking and parenting courses draw crowds

**St Andrew's Te Awamutu has seen its community outreach snowball from cooking classes and coffee for mums, to parenting courses and exercise sessions that involve more than 70 families every week.**

Family worker Pat Schwass says minister the Rev Diane Yule has been challenging St Andrew's to be a "church without walls," which means "using the gifts and talents we have to reach the community for Jesus Christ."

Pat juggles the 15-hours-a-week family worker job with other part-time work, having made "a career change just before 60" when she started the role two-and-a-half years ago.

She began with a "mothers of pre-schoolers" (or MOPS) programme, which lets mothers spend a couple of hours chatting over coffee, often including a speaker on topics like parenting or budgeting, or working on a craft project. Their children are cared for in a crèche staffed by older women from the church.

At the same time, church member Kathy Malcolm felt inspired to teach people how to cook. The church offered to fund a six-week course called "Homemade" that would give parents tips on basic but delicious meals, as well as how to make cooking fun for their children.

About 20 mums come along to MOPS every week, and around 10 people are part of each cooking course.

Pat describes the networking that has come out of these two programmes as "amazing". MOPS attendees were interested in the cooking programme, and Pat helped out with crèche that ran during cooking classes.

Relationships developed and people started to talk about difficulties they were experiencing with their families. So Pat decided to train as a Parents Inc. facilitator and run parenting courses. "Everything we've stepped out to do, God has brought the resources. We're learning that as a church."

She says many of the people being attracted to the church's community programmes



Children are cared for during the MOPS programme

have little support, with grandparents unavailable, and are stuck in the trap of debt-driven spending. "You think you know what's happening in communities but it's not till you're working at the coal-face that you recognise the pressures. You start to see what people are up against and what they're dealing with. It's opened our eyes to the needs in the community."

Pat says she aims to run a parenting course each term, and if people can't pay the course cost, then the church helps out. "We teach them to enjoy their kids instead of just enduring the parenthood."

To attract people to their programmes, the church "puts information in all sorts of places" – including Plunket, counsellors, the community house, and public health nurses. Pat says nearly everyone coming to MOPS is from the community, rather than it being primarily a social group for people already in the church.

About 80 people usually attend the two services Te Awamutu Presbyterian runs every Sunday, and those attending the community programmes haven't necessarily started coming along to worship.

"But it was never about that," Pat says, "It's about us being in the community. If we don't spend the time building the relationships, we don't really have the right to share the Gospel. It's amazing, once you step out in faith, how the community gets to know, and it draws the people in."

The congregation is heavily involved in supporting the community work, Pat says, "with the helpers for MOPS being mostly grandmas over 70".

Diane says the church also saw the need for an exercise class that "took account of God's intention that we need to care for all of who we are" and so decided to start an

programme called "Body, Soul & Spirit", which provides lower impact exercises for older people.

A dedicated team "front" the weekly classes, which at 40 people a session have grown almost too big for the church hall. Relationships are grown during the coffee time afterwards, with many of the people who attend having no other link to the church.

Pat says it takes a while until people feel connected "beyond what they come for", but it is starting to happen. The exercise group has donated money towards the parenting course, and at the church fair a number of the MOPS mums ran a stall and "felt part of it".

"I feel we're on the threshold of people wanting to know about the Gospel."

By Amanda Wells Spanz

# New Study:

## Economic Crisis under spotlight of faith

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

Ecumenical Coalition for Justice

# Youth group curbs bullying behaviour

**A new youth group in Ashburton is starting to make a difference for some often-difficult preteens.**

St David's Union minister the Rev Rachel Judge says that at the start of 2009, she felt strongly it was time to provide something for the intermediate age group. The church put a notice in the local school newsletter and issued some personal invitations.

The new group, Wednesday Wonders, attracted about 10 girls, some of whom have issues with bullying behaviour. Nearly all the girls were previously unconnected with the church.

While Rachel started off as the sole leader, another four women joined her to make up a supportive team, which has proved crucial.

"Bullying is a real issue for this age group. They can verbally abuse, and can come close to blows."

Having a good ratio of leaders to attendees is one way to manage this; another has been "learning to be firm".

The girls keep coming "because it's fun," Rachel says, with good food and variety of activities. "We do the God stuff in a fun way".

Highlights have included inviting a beauty therapist along to do their nails; a treat that had been postponed from a previous term because of behaviour issues.

Last November, the girls held a special dinner for their families

and people who had helped during the year.

Girls have invited others along, Rachel says. "Friends come and sometimes their enemies come."

She says the group offers "something they don't get anywhere else".

The leaders have noticed a growth in the girls' awareness of other people.

"One of our goals is that they see a world existing outside their own."

They have made prayer journals, and usually have a circle prayer before they leave every week; "there's less giggling now".

"We're trying to put some really positive goals in their lives. And some wisdom about how vulnerable they can be."

Other activities have included the 20-hour famine, which involved a sleep-over at Rachel's house, the Kids Friendly Transformers leadership training event and follow-up service, and listening to a teenager speak to them about her own journey with God.

The girls sang in the church concert and have done some studies on basic values, including trust and respect.

Issues they struggle with include a need to be noticed, loved and special, while still being "normal", Rachel says. "Peer pressure is a big thing."

Rachel says the group has opened the leaders' eyes. "It's helped us not to write off a group that we often put in the too hard basket."

"We try to be a bit of a role model and show God's love to them."

"And they do keep turning up."

By Amanda Wells **Spanz**

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# GLOBAL MISSION

## Presbyterians dig deep to support Samoa

**The 29 September 2009 earthquake and subsequent tsunami devastated Samoa, causing the loss of more than 100 lives and the destruction of entire villages.**



**The tsunami devastated large sections of Samoa's coastline**

Presbyterian churches responded to the disaster with an outpouring of prayer and practical support, including fundraising events, supporting appeals by aid agencies, and filling shipping containers with useful supplies. Our Pacific Island Presbyterian congregations were deeply affected by the disaster and responded generously; PIPC Newtown collected donations totaling \$15,500 just for the Red Cross appeal.

Some of our health, engineering and building professionals worked voluntarily in tsunami-ravaged Samoa for weeks and months at a time. Army chaplain Ra Koia went to Samoa with the NZ Defence Response Team. A doctor, dentist, dental assistant and six young people, all from St Paul's Presbyterian in Invercargill, joined a Youth with a Mission Samoa-bound relief ship; when they arrived, the health professionals found such demand they worked 12-hour days for several weeks. The youth group also had full days and nights entertaining children and painting school playground equipment.

Ross Copeland, a member of Greenlane Presbyterian Church, Auckland, used his civil engineering expertise to make a significant difference. Sponsored by his employer Mainzeal Property and Construction, Ross spent two weeks in Samoa heading up New Zealand aid organisation Engineers without Borders' work to restore the country's main fresh water pipeline, which runs along the southwest coast of Samoa's main island, Upolu. Ninety per cent of the pipeline was badly damaged in the quake.

Ross left for Samoa less than five days after the tsunami, and Greenlane Presbyterian asked him for advice on the most useful help they could give. Ross suggested the church purchase a much-needed electricity generator for the Engineers without Borders water restoration project. Greenlane bought the \$2,500 Honda generator using a combination of its funds and a special collection, as well as raising other money to send.

Ross says that the church's generosity continues to help those most affected by the tsunami; at the end of the water project, the generator was passed onto Habitat for Humanity to assist those volunteering their time building houses for the homeless. Habitat hopes to build four houses a day, eventually housing 450 families.

Shortly after arriving in Samoa, Ross phoned Greenlane Presbyterian to ask if anyone could help with a problem: he had found a volcanic lake and wanted to know if the volcanic water could be made safe to drink. The Rev Heather Coster says, "this request threw us at first; it was a real learning curve as it wasn't an area any of us knew anything about. So we did research, contacted scientists and found out that it was indeed possible to make the volcanic water drinkable."

In March, Ross will return to Samoa with engineers from UNICEF Australia to

review the situation and follow up on new water system design options.

He says that after two weeks of intense restoration, the pipeline still had some problems. "There is a limited time the water pump can operate each day as it can overheat, and also if too much fresh water is drawn, salt water enters the lens and makes the water brackish. Another cause for concern is leakage from cracks caused to the pipe by the earthquake and illegal connections".

Finding new sources of drinking water is another challenge, Ross says. "Residents from affected villages have moved inland to higher ground, and these displaced villagers are building houses where there's no water infrastructure in place to meet the new sudden demand."

Ross says that the main pipeline could not have been repaired without generous support from small organisations, including Greenlane Presbyterian, as well as sponsorship from large companies such as Mainzeal Property and Construction, donations of \$56,000 worth of fittings and valves from Hynds Pipe Systems and more than \$90,000 of pipe line from Marley New Zealand. Two plumbers, Sean Walker and Troy Rayner, were supplied by DL Good Plumbing of Auckland.

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

# GLOBAL MISSION

## Young Kiwis to live and serve in Manila slum

**Wellingtonians David and Maria Cross are dedicated to living a lifestyle very different from their 20- and 30-something peers; both in New Zealand and soon, they hope, overseas.**

Living with urban poor isn't new for David and Maria, who have been involved in Wellington's Urban Vision for eight and five years respectively. Urban Vision is a group of households that seeks to live among and build relationships with those on the margins of society.

In Manila, David and Maria will be part of a team from Servants for Asia's Urban Poor, which is an international organisation that was started by Kiwis 25 years ago. Servants has teams living in slums in the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Canada and two Indian cities.

The Rev Jono Ryan, who ministers at Highgate Presbyterian Church in Dunedin, also works part-time for Servants, and Maria says their relationship with Jono has been key in preparing them for the step overseas.

Since David and Maria married three and half years ago, they've been living in a council flat in Wellington's Mt Cook, as part of an Urban Vision team operating in the area.

This meant having a home that was always open to neighbours dropping in, as well as trying different ways to engage with the neighbourhood.

It was a noisy environment, Maria says, where you were constantly aware of being surrounded by people 24/7. "People would walk past and say 'hello' multiple times a day."

Many residents experienced mental illness and overcrowding could be an issue. Everyone shared a laundromat, which became a good place for building relationships over frustrations with the washing machines, she says.



Maria and David Cross

Maria and David spent a lot of time with children of the complex, who hung out in the concrete alleyways.

She says they would play boardgames and help the children with their homework.

"The children were so excited to have people there who were interested in them, who were safe and who treated them with respect."

Maria and David both worked part time (without receiving any other funding), so that they could become fully involved in the community. "We were choosing to sacrifice some of the other things we might have had, so we could centre ourselves there. We had a very simple lifestyle."

"You felt like you could share so much of life more deeply."

David did communications and events work for Downtown Community Ministries, which helps the homeless in Wellington, while Maria has been working as a community nurse in Newtown.

It took time living in the flats to build up trust, Maria says, and sometimes they took risks and got involved in people's arguments.

"Our relationships with them were quite up and down, depending on what was happening in people's lives.

"We were constantly asking ourselves, 'what's the good news for this person?'"

They had always planned only five years of involvement with Urban Vision, having felt a strong call to go overseas.

Last year, Maria and David spent two months visiting the work of Servants' in Cambodia, Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand, to explore where they might go.

Maria says it was inspiring meeting people who were committed to the long process of community development or seeing

transformation happen in communities, "and giving up quite a lot to do it".

"We realised that we wanted to be involved in a neighbourhood of urban poor that we can share life deeply with, so it needed to be a place where that was possible for foreigners to do." They also wanted to be part of a strong sense of community among the Servants team, and were inspired by what they learned of their work in Manila, which Maria describes as a "holistic ministry" including some environmental projects, which isn't common for slum ministry.

Servants already has seven people in Manila; three Kiwis and the rest from Switzerland.

Maria and David hope to join the team in April, funding permitting.

Their first two years in Manila will be spent "as learners", Maria says: of the language (Tagalog), about the culture, and about how relationships function.

"Hopefully out of that will come some specific work we can get involved in."

When they arrive, Maria and David will arrange to live with a local family in the slum.

They'll take only a suitcase each, and become used to temperatures around or above 30 degrees. While there's some sporadic illegal electricity, there will be no refrigeration, oven, or washing machine.

The experience won't be totally foreign to them, after spending a month in a Cambodian slum during their 2009 trip.

While the makeshift houses are run down, people have "a real sense of pride in their homes," Maria says. "But there are definitely rats running around."

Forty percent of Manila's residents live in slums, which are particularly vulnerable to flooding. Maria says typhoons and fires in the past year have had a huge impact, with political upheaval also likely in the lead up to this year's elections.

Maria and David are thinking long term in terms of their work in Manila. "It could be ten years. We're dedicated to it being the long haul, as much as that's possible for us."

What they'll miss most is friends and family, especially "the ability to be there when there's things going on for people".

They won't be earning money in Manila and need to raise \$25,000 in funding each

# GLOBAL MISSION



years. Maria says the church has been very supportive and interested in their work and its implications. "We've really appreciated their friendship and fellowship."

Maria says they'd be keen to help out hosting the slum immersion trips run by Servants for young people or youth groups. Each person goes by themselves to live with a slum family. "It's what we did 10 years ago that lead us here now."

Maria says our New Zealand lifestyles mean we can't avoid having an impact on the poor.

"We're exploiting the world's poor every day whether we realise it or not."

But she says we can choose to develop real relationships that can "challenge us much more deeply about our choices and how we live here".

"A lot of people find it too hard to see any steps they can take, so they put us and our 'radical' choices in a box that's completely different from their own.

"But anyone can be making a choice about how to radically love their neighbour."

By Amanda Wells Spanz

## Want to get in touch?

Contact David and Maria at [mariaanddave@gmail.com](mailto:mariaanddave@gmail.com)

year, most of which goes towards insurance, regular breaks away from the slum, team office space and flights home every two or three years. Rent and food costs are minimal, Maria says. "It doesn't cost much to live in a slum."

Maria describes the fundraising as feeling "like quite a risk in terms of testing our faith".

But it's not just financial support that they're after. "Part of our role is to build

some bridges between people here and in Manila, whether that's prayer or receiving our newsletter.

"It's a challenge to find ways to connect it to people so that they can be a part of it.

"There's so much to be gained for churches in New Zealand to have a real relationship with people overseas."

David and Maria have been part of Island Bay Presbyterian for the past three and half

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## Small Southland church grows through mission focus

**For more than 90 years, Knapdale-Waikaka Presbyterian Church in Southland has placed a high priority on supporting local and overseas mission.**

The parish instituted the Waikaka Missionary Support Group 50 years ago, and many in the parish are also supporters of the Waidale Missionary Trust, a large livestock trading scheme that supports over 40 New Zealand and overseas mission organisations through finance and prayer.

Church member Elinor Collins says that the Waikaka Missionary Support Group currently supports both financially and through prayer four SIM missionary families working in Africa. The families have chosen Christian education and medical ministries. The church's history of supporting missionaries dates back to the 1920s, when they supported missionary and local man Jack Nicholson in Nigeria.

The Support Group has supported two of the SIM missionary families for 20 years and the other two for around three years. "When [one missionary] retires we look for another to give our support to", Elinor says.

The Knapdale-Waikaka Church has encouraged mission within its congregation and has helped several teams from the church's youth group take mission trips to Fiji and Samoa, and recently helped Bruce Wilson, a Knapdale-Waikaka youth group leader, to travel to Uganda to build school classrooms with Breakfree Expeditions (in association with Tearfund). Bruce, an apprentice builder, was based for most of January 2010 in the village of Watoto.

To raise money towards the \$7000 cost of the trip, Bruce, who's 18, came up with unusual fundraising ideas, including a toilet-paper sale, and a Safari themed ball was organised by several of his youth group friends.

Bruce has attended Knapdale-Waikaka for the past year, and Elinor says he is part of the growth the church has seen during the past 15 months.

"For some years our church numbers were in decline, then quite recently we started to see youth come to us in increasing numbers, and some began to bring their friends from non-church homes, and one or two have even brought their parents. We presently have no permanent minister and have not used any programmes to attract youth.

"For about 14 years, 10 to 12 people, including the then-ministers, met together for prayer early every Tuesday morning. We prayed for God to revitalise our parish, and the Church as a whole, and we are convinced that the increase in numbers we are seeing is God's answer to our prayers. Now on a Sunday morning, we have around 70 to 80 come to worship and one third of them are in



**Bruce Wilson and the organisers of the Safari Ball, which raised money for his mission trip to Uganda**

their teens to early 20s. We now have 40 in our youth group. We are delighted when new, young faces turn up."

Elinor says over the years the church's style of worship has changed to some degree, but basically remains traditional. "We sing a mix of modern and older songs and we have a music group of about 12 people playing a variety of instruments. Two of our youth group have taken turns at preaching – one was very nervous and there was spontaneous applause when he finished! Quite often our young people take children's talks and Bible readings at services."

It is the traditional style of the church that, Elinor speculates, the youth are attracted to. "One of our young women who went to a large city to study was back on a visit and said that she doesn't like the big churches because you don't get to know everyone like at home."

The youth group are friends, says Elinor, "who are very active; they play volleyball in Dunedin, go on three-day tramps, go to camps, rabbit shooting, to balls, the pool, play cricket, paint ball, have dessert and movie nights and they always take turns in reading a devotion and have a week-night study group."

Knapdale-Waikaka is looking for a minister, and Elinor says, "we want someone to join us as we follow the terms of our mission statement: 'God's mission for the Knapdale-Waikaka Parish is to help people to know Jesus Christ in all His fullness'".

By Angela Singer Spanz



## Myanmar trips galvanise St Columba

**Visiting Myanmar has turned Angela Norton's life upside down.**

She has just visited the country for the third time, leading a team from Auckland's St Columba @ Botany, which has developed a partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

Angela says after her first trip in September 2007, she came back with a strong sense that God was asking her to serve the people of Myanmar.

"It opened my eyes to the fact that I could help them."

Realising that she needed to gain some qualifications and credibility, at the end of 2008, Angela left her banking job and started full-time study at Auckland university, majoring in political studies and history.

"It's been such a joy to take up that calling."

Six people, including Angela, who have been to Myanmar have set up the group Pacific Chin Partners to further their work, with St Columba acting as a gateway for other churches and organisations who want to get involved.

"We want to make sure the partnership is held collectively, rather than depending on any one individual or organisation."

Also involved is the Aotearoa Development Cooperative microenterprise group, spearheaded by Andrew Colgan of St Luke's in Remuera, who visited Myanmar again late last year.

Angela says the relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar is far from one-way.

"Everybody in the partnership has something to give and receive. It's not about us giving them lots of money and resources; it's about being there with them."

Discussions with other churches are progressing, she says, with plenty of scope for large or small groups to get involved.

The trip Angela led in January involved one other person from St Columba, and two from Discovery Christian Centre in Hamilton. They spent time with students at the theological college, helping them with their English, as well as visiting the projects that they have been supporting.

Another trip in late February, led by Angela's father the Rev Andrew Norton, who is also the minister of St Columba @ Botany, took four other people from St Columba with the aim of connecting with the women of the church, as well as giving some leadership training.

Angela says different people from St Columba have gone on each trip, so that there are more and more people able to share the stories of Myanmar within the congregation.

St Columba has created a "ricebowl" fund that allows its members to get involved with the work even if they can't travel to Myanmar. Participants donate a nominated amount each week or month,



**The Pacific Chin Partners (left to right): Margaret Dewse, Mark Bartlem, Bruce Dixon, Linda Dixon, Angela Norton, Andrew Norton, Sue Norton, Dawn Carlisle and Caroline Kells**

with the funds going towards both feeding people and income-generating projects. These include business such as tailoring, rickshaws, chicken farming.

Within three weeks of launching the ricebowl fund, St Columba members had pledged \$10,000 of donations during 2010.

But Angela says simply finding funds "won't solve everything". Part of the partnership is giving people from Myanmar the opportunity to see what life is like in New Zealand.

However, it is difficult for them to get the necessary certified documents, with lack of technology, bank accounts and postal system creating huge obstacles.

The work with Myanmar is about getting the people of St Columba to think outside of their community, Angela says, and build real relationships with people experiencing vastly different ways of life and challenges.

"There are so many things that they can't do that I have the privilege to do."

You can't visit Myanmar without being aware of the constraints imposed by the authorities.

Angela says their contacts face significant hidden costs because of their visits, as well as risks from simply meeting with foreigners. A state chaperon is always present.

"We can only ask them how much it is costing," she says, and then attempt to ensure these costs are covered. "But they want us to come."

Each trip has "uncovered another layer of the onion" in terms of the way in people in Myanmar deal with daily life, she says,

"You can't go there without directly or indirectly supporting the regime."

By Amanda Wells Spanz

### Want to find out more or get involved?

Visit [www.stcolumba.org.nz](http://www.stcolumba.org.nz), where you can sign up to receive a monthly email update on their Myanmar work

# GLOBAL MISSION

## Agriculture takes climate-change spotlight

The Copenhagen climate change conference was a failure but New Zealand emerged with one of the few tangible results.

Far from the transformative “Kairos moment” that Kiwi Church leaders had advocated, the results of Copenhagen were almost the reverse of expectations. The hope had been that world leaders would act decisively on climate change and New Zealand’s own timid stance would look out of step.

Instead, global leaders failed while New Zealand emerged from the fray as the leaders in setting up a new global research alliance to look at ways to cut agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.



Sustainable organic farming has been practised for centuries and can help reduce carbon levels

The first meeting of this new global research alliance is to take place in New Zealand in April, with representatives from 30 countries attending.

It is to be a heavyweight organisation, with New Zealand supplying \$45 million of the \$150 million in funding so far announced from the participants.

About 50 per cent of our greenhouse gas comes from agriculture.

Christian World Service shared in the disappointment of Copenhagen but also believes that this New Zealand-led entity deserves qualified support, coupled with strong advocacy for the peasant farmers of the world.

Christian World Service has many partners working with small scale traditional farmers in countries as diverse as Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, India and the Philippines.

In many of these countries, the preferred farming style is both sustainable and, in the Western sense of the word, organic. What passes as organic farming to us is in many older cultures just a continuation of traditional practice.

It also has the merit of costing a lot less than modern farming techniques that call for costly inputs such as fertilisers, other chemicals, and new seed varieties.

There is some scientific evidence available that organic farming techniques can play their part in reducing carbon levels in the atmosphere, rather than adding to them as conventional agriculture does.

Research from the Rodale Institute in the United States, which has studied organic farming for over 50 years, showed some fairly startling results in their Compost Utilisation Trial (CUT) study over 10 years. They showed that the use of composted manure with crop rotation in organic systems can result in carbon sequestration of up to 2000 pounds per acre, per year.

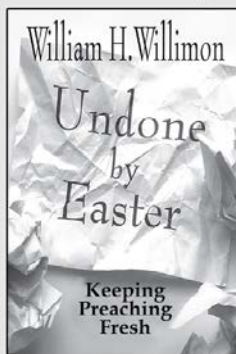
This contrasts with normal systems of standard tillage and chemical fertilisers that result in the loss of 300 pounds of carbon per acre, per year.

CWS wants to make sure that traditional sustainable small scale farming gets taken into consideration as the new global research alliance gets started.

By Greg Jackson, CWS Spanz

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*Presbyterian Support*

## Presbyterian Support

Collectively, the seven Presbyterian Support organisations are one of the largest providers of social services in New Zealand. In each of our communities we serve children, families, individuals and older people with a range of programmes, services and living options.

For more than 100 years, Presbyterian Support has been the face of the Church's social services. It's the human services agency that "has your name on it", if you like!

In coming issues of *Spanz* we will tell you more about the services we deliver in each region. The purpose of this article is to give you a taste of the different ways we connect with local church communities. This ensures that social service and social action are both present when we serve our communities together.

### "A place I can go if I am in trouble"

Presbyterian Support Upper South Island Community Family Worker Marcel van der Weerden spends part of his working week at St Stephen's Community Centre to help meet the needs of families in the Ilam and Bryndwyr districts of Christchurch.

The project is a partnership between the church and Presbyterian Support. "We recognised a need in our area for a professional counsellor, and we particularly wanted to tap into Presbyterian Support's expertise in regards to providing professional service with the backup a field worker needs," says Mission Facilitator Brian Hardie. "We also realised there was a deep need among our community youth. We ran no programmes ourselves for at-risk young people and at after-school programmes often young people had behavioural issues we didn't feel equipped to deal with. We needed a counsellor who can get out into the community, build relationships with schools, and build trust."

This is what Marcel has been doing. "I enjoy being part of the community out there, the flexibility of moving around, and connection in the community," he says. His focus has been particularly on family counselling. He visits the local schools and facilitates resiliency programmes. Most referrals have come from the schools, and most have been parenting issues. "Being at St Stephen's makes the counselling much more accessible to people in the community, and it gives people who work in the community a place to refer clients to," Marcel says.

"We're building awareness in the community that here's a place I can go to if I'm in trouble," says Brian.

### Putting good ideas to work

Anne Overton, the Community Mission Liaison for Presbyterian Support Northern, connects with Presbyterian and Union churches to help them identify and respond to needs in their communities. It might be working with the local school to create a community garden; having cups of tea with lonely older people; or organising church young people into a working bee for the neighbours.

"It's about asking 'What's God up to in our neighbourhood?' and helping churches develop a strategic plan to meet those needs. Some churches have good ideas, but they don't know how to start. Presbyterian Support has the infrastructure and resources to be able to work alongside them and work out a plan together," Anne said.

With over 100 Presbyterian churches in the region, Anne is busy building relationships and gathering information about who is doing what and where.



Anne Overton, Presbyterian Support Northern's Community Mission Liaison, gathering information on church and community activities.

### Social service informing social action

Like Anne, the Rev Dennis Povey, the Community Mission Advisor for Presbyterian Support Otago, started his work with the gathering of information. Often more is happening than people realise, it's just that it's never all recorded in one place. Since 2001, Dennis has worked with congregations in Otago and helped them connect with their communities. An early example was Dunedin South's Plus Bus - a transport service for local residents who are older or less physically

able. South Dunedin is an area which has a particularly high concentration of older residents and economically disadvantaged households.

This work led Dennis into researching what he was observing and two publications on income adequacy: "How much is enough?" and "Can we do better?" have now been published by Presbyterian Support Otago. Dunedin's rental housing was the subject of Dennis' "Old, cold and costly" and research into housing for older people resulted in "With my boots on". These publications have been well received by the Church and have been the basis for social action and lobbying for more just treatment of our most vulnerable citizens.

Collaboration is essential and Dennis took the lead in bringing together low-cost housing provider, *Just Housing Otepoti*, and Presbyterian Support to build four homes, as part of a government-funded social housing rental initiative on land adjacent to Flagstaff Union parish.

### James Gibb Fund

Presbyterian Support Central has a small fund to help congregations in the lower North Island deliver social service projects. St James, in New Plymouth, is one of the 13 parishes sharing grants of \$45,000 in 2010.

The James Gibb Fund enables St James to continue its *Te Oneone Pai* outreach programme. It will resource parenting courses, peer support and educational assistance for children as well as one-to-one support for families in need.

### Shared Chaplaincy

Presbyterian Support South Canterbury and the South Canterbury District Health Board have an innovative Hospital Chaplaincy arrangement where one full time Chaplain works half time at each organisation. This provides a quality service for hospital patients, whilst enhancing the spiritual support available for residents of Presbyterian Support's rest homes and hospitals.

If you or your congregation are interested in working with Presbyterian Support to "make a difference" in the lives of people in your community, we would welcome your contact. Please call the region that covers your area - it will be listed under "Presbyterian Support" in your phone book.

If you would like to support the work we do together, please call us on our donation line 0508 86 4357.

# We are for people, not for profit

Your bequest can help improve the lives of thousands every year.



Since the beginning of last century, Presbyterian Support has been providing services to meet the social needs of New Zealanders in your community.

We help vulnerable children and families and support older people through our positive ageing services. Every year gifts from people in your community positively affect the lives of over a hundred thousand people.

Why not make your gift count too? Leave us a bequest and help us continue making a positive difference in your community.

Free Phone 0508 86 4357

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



*Presbyterian Support*