

Spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

AUTUMN 2016, ISSUE 65

Church's national marae re-opens

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COMMENT: MURRAY TALBOT

Letting go gracefully

Over the past three years at Hope Presbyterian, Hornby, we have been transitioning our leadership.

After 25 years as senior pastor, I swapped roles with assistant pastor Rev Hamish Galloway before moving into a part-time role at Hope West Melton. I am very grateful to Hamish and the elders for allowing me the privilege of a staged transition. To have experienced a sudden stop could have been extremely difficult. But not everyone can handle having “the old boy” still hanging around so I appreciate the grace shown by Hamish and his big-heartedness in not being threatened by my presence. What is it like to transition from senior pastor to part-time pastor?

My initial feeling was one of *relief and release*. There is a burden attached to leadership that one carries – it’s an unseen thing – it’s related to the weight of responsibility. But also in church leadership I think there is a spiritual aspect to this. I noticed that when I returned from holiday I would encounter this *unseen pressure* that wasn’t present on holiday. It’s a relief to be free from the full weight of that.

There is also a feeling of *peace*. There was a growing sense within me that it was right to step aside. Several things informed that: Several times in the past, I had reached the point where I knew I had to make adjustments to my leadership style if we were to continue to progress and I had managed to make those adjustments. But this was different. Things had become a lot more complex and I realised I had reached my leadership

capacity. It needed someone with greater skills than I had. My wife Janice’s decline in health was also a factor – she has been a wonderful support, and it was time I was more available to support her. Plus, my energy levels had dropped markedly. I knew more energy was required in the leadership role.

Despite the relief, release and peace, there is also inevitably, a *sense of loss*. We had a great team and the loss of camaraderie is something which is tangibly felt; also the loss of pastoral connection with people who have journeyed with us for a long time. You come to value the faithful, loyal people who stand by you for many years despite all of your mistakes.

There is a loss of influence – no longer are you able to influence decisions to the same extent. The temptation to “make your view known” has to be kept well in check. Connected with this is the fact that you no longer have the “inside information” although Hamish has been gracious in “letting me in” over cups of coffee.

As much as I hate to admit it, there is also something of a loss of identity. I know it is dangerous to have your worth and identity tied up with your role, but maybe it is inevitable to some degree. Certainly I have felt this at times – and that is a good thing as it pushes me back to the essential foundation of “who I am in Christ”.

But there are also some wonderful *gains* including more discretionary time, which is a very special thing. It has helped me appreciate even more the volunteers, the elders, and the pray-ers who have given up their discretionary time to serve



Rev Murray Talbot.

the body of Christ over the years. I have a new appreciation of them.

I admire the current leadership of Hope Presbyterian. They are an astute group of leaders, well led by Hamish. I think church life has become increasingly more difficult over the past 35 years I have been in ministry. The cultural context has changed markedly. Compliance issues have added more complexity, and the spiritual climate has become more difficult, so it is not an easy thing to lead a church at present. With three sites, and two large trusts to oversee, it is complex and I commit to praying for the current leadership team, and encourage all church members to do the same throughout the country. Pray for your church leaders.

Finally, I have gained the sobering realisation that God doesn’t actually need me. There are people ready to take my place but I count it a wonderful privilege to still be able to serve the Lord whether in paid ministry or as a volunteer.

– Rev Murray Talbot

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Rev Dr Colin Marshall

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

The Right Rev Andrew Norton contributes a regular column to *Spanz*



I believe the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand is ready and willing for a time of significant renewal. The signs of a new season are emerging...

- a growing spiritual hunger
- a rediscovery of voices from the grassroots of the church
- a desire to speak and act prophetically in our nation
- a willingness to adventure into new forms of being and doing church
- significant pain and dissatisfaction with the way things are

The feedback from my white paper *A Matter of Faith* produced last year, received over 90 submissions from individuals and groups, together amounting to 63,347 words. This feedback is hard hitting and hopeful. It represents the voice of many Presbyterians around the country who have a deep love for our Church, even though at times it is expressed in pain and frustration. This muddled ground of division, disengagement and decline is where I find remarkable seeds of hope.

The feedback on the white paper was very affirming on the eight key issues I raised, and while there was significant diversity of how we might address those issues, the common thread calls for greater spiritual discernment and courageous action.

My first reading of the feedback was with tears as many people expressed their pain and frustration with the Church. This was deeply moving as people expressed how they have been wounded, disillusioned and abused by the Church. The bad news: if we keep doing what we have always done, we will go into greater division, disengagement and decline.

As I re-read again and again, I recognised that this pain was evidence of a deep love

and passion for our Church and God's mission.

From the muddled ground there emerged a green volunteer.

The green volunteer is a sign of hope; it is the God breathed life into our context.

I believe God is breathing new life into our Church.

Throughout history, the Church has seen times of advance and times of decline; times of struggle and times of renewal. In every age the spirit of God breathes new life. Whatever language you use – crisis or opportunity – there is a convergence of factors we find ourselves in, all calling for our attention. For some people, all they can see is the muddled ground but there is a green volunteer, there always was and is!

"Green Volunteers" is the name I have given to two documents I've written in response to the feedback on the white paper. *Green Volunteers: Your Voice (Part I)* is a summary of feedback on the white paper. In this document you will read the brutal honesty of our current situation that calls for change.

The second paper *Green Volunteers: A Way Forward (Part II)* is my attempt to put into language a prayer for renewal of our Church. I'm not offering a model of institutional reform (institutions seldom have the ability to reform themselves) but a call for reformation and renewal from the ground up. I believe God's spirit moves through people. This movement I'm calling "Green Volunteers", a living sign of hope and agents of change.

Oh God, take

*this muddled ground of brokenness,
cultivate our bruised and weary hearts
with the seed of a green volunteer.*

A green volunteer

*with eyes to see beyond this world's horizon,
graceful in pain,
defiant in hope.*

In hope brimming with joy

*to be nothing more or less
than all that is contained in your
imagination for us.*

Amen

Digital copies of *Green Volunteers* (parts I and II) have been sent to all parishes and are also available for download from the Church's website: www.presbyterian.org.nz



The refurbished marae which cost \$1.3m to complete.

Refurbished Church marae re-opens

A five-year, \$1.3 million project to redevelop Ohope Marae has been completed. Last month an official opening breathed life back into Te Maungarongo.

The celebrations on Sunday, 17 January began with a dawn ceremony to reawaken the marae. Led by tohunga (religious leaders) from Ngāti Awa, Tuhoe and Waikato, Church Moderator the Rt Rev Andrew Norton and Te Aka Puaho moderator the Rev Wayne Te Kaawa, the dawn ceremony was attended by 300 people.

Concluding prayers were followed by breakfast in the newly re-clad wharekai (dining room). At 10am an official party of 120 arrived from Ngauruawahia, supporting the Māori king's elder sister Heeni. The marae has a special relationship with Kingitanga, and a plaque has been placed on the wharenui entrance in January this year to recognise that the Māori Queen Te Ātairangikaahu was the first person to enter the house in 1977, when it was last rebuilt.

Te Maungarongo is the home of Te Aka Puaho, the Presbyterian Church's Maori Synod, Te Aka Puaho. Moderator the

Rev Wayne Te Kaawa says the latest upgrade of the 70-year-old marae was necessary on many levels.

"When the marae re-opened in 1977 it was considered state of the art, but even so it only had one toilet and two showers for men and no insulation. By 2005, it needed a lot of maintenance work and development to meet safety standards, so we decided to modernise."

The wharenui (meeting house) had been clad in ponga logs, which presented a fire hazard so modernisation included their removal and the installation of sprinklers and fire alarms to protect the precious heritage buildings. The entire wharekai was upgraded with new aluminium windows, cladding, insulation and piles, while the ablution areas were expanded.

The issue of protocol was raised during the design stages. "We had some interesting discussions with our kaumatua about what's protocol and what's not," says Wayne. "We had to say, look this isn't 1916, it's 2016. So we found ways around the issues and have a result that doesn't detract from what has come before."

In December 2014, ahead of the renovation work, the marae had been put to sleep using physical touch.

"You do it gently, like putting a child to sleep," says Wayne. "We went around and rubbed the carvings, tukutuku [decorative panels] and kowhaiwhai [ornamental rafters]. So the opening ceremony to reawaken the marae was the same in reverse, gently massaging them back to life."

Some of the original art work has been in storage for many years and Wayne

hopes they will be able to now find places to display it.

The upgrade was supported by a grant of \$300,000 from Presbyterian Church, while the rest of the budget came from sponsors such as community trusts and the Tuhoe iwi settlement. These sponsors were recognised during a lunch banquet on the opening day that catered for 500 people.

Seeing the large number of young people from Te Aka Puaho stepping up to leadership on the day was wonderful, says Wayne.

"It showed that Te Aka Puaho is in good heart and the future leadership of the Church is in good hands."

The day of celebrations ended with closing prayers but informal korero carried on until the next morning, when the sun rose over the ancient pa site of Paripari, says Wayne.

Ohope Marae is nestled between two pa sites, and tucked behind the Ohope Christian camp. Along with Kingitanga, the marae has special relationships with Waikato-Tainui, Ratana, Ringatu, Pai Marire and the Methodist Church.

The tangata whenua of Te Maungarongo are the parishes of Whakatane, Kawerau and Waimana. Along with the moderator of Te Aka Puaho and the Rt Rev Andrew Norton, the tangata whenua hosted an open day on Waitangi Day to have a look around the newly refurbished marae. Local Ohope residents and the wider Church were invited to attend.

Te Maungarongo is available for bookings by calling the Te Aka Puaho office on 07 312 4696.

Jade Reidy Spanz



YOUNG Presbyterians

advocating for our earth

Young Presbyterians, like many other Christians, are concerned that we are not being stewards of the earth as Christians are called to be. They are educated and active about this century's burning issue: climate change and the environment.

On 12 December when the UN Paris conference began, 600,000 people worldwide demonstrated against what they considered as a too-weak treaty on climate change. Two weeks earlier, the biggest People's Climate March in New Zealand's history had a strong presence of young people from the combined churches.

Rev Jordan Redding, 25, is a newly ordained minister at Hope Church. Climate change is a big focus of Jordan's faith journey and he took part in the

Christchurch march. He also contributed to the Presbyterian Church's 2015 submission to the government on post-2020 climate change targets. Paris was significant, he reflects, but our government's response was disappointing.

"Their view is that we're not contributing that much to climate change. I don't think that's an excuse as New Zealanders are living unsustainably. If everyone adopted our lifestyle the world would be in serious trouble," he asserts. "We need ongoing public pressure to force a change in priorities. Likewise in the Church there's concern but little action. Protesting is viewed with suspicion as being ultra-left or too hippy."

Jessie Boston, 23, is a member of St John's in the City and took part in the Wellington march.

On 28 November 2015 at different locations around the globe including New Zealand, people joined together to participate in the People's Climate March, an annual event to raise awareness of environmental issues.

"I'm passionate and want to get people impassioned," she says. "Unless you're a climate change sceptic you should be active. It's a sad thing that something drastic will need to happen before people change, and by then it will be too hard."

The climate change march wasn't just about energy, she says. "It's about how we do life and respect others around us. One of the key issues for this generation is the disconnect between God and the Church and also from the earth – from the food we eat, our clothing sources and the impact of our actions."

Jessie works for a funeral company and sees people opting for greener alternatives, such as cardboard coffins. Both Jessie and Jordan agree that millennials are becoming well-informed consumers.

"We're putting more pressure on suppliers and are better informed about where things come from," she says. "There's more transparency now than before. And also some resentment that not enough has been done by our elders – they've handed over a planet that's no longer habitable."



Tree planting is a practical way to make a difference.

Jessie is inspired by mentors in older generations, such as her parents and world leaders, but expects more from the Church.

"God gave us a magical playground and we're causing such harm to it. The Church should be right at the front of that battle to protect it. Instead, it has stood back and waited for others and then come in behind. Divesting from fossil fuels is a good step, but we could be more intentional and take a lead, by investing in sustainable energy for example."

In 2014, the General Assembly asked the Church Property Trustees to divest from fossil fuel investments. Individual congregations were encouraged to do the same with their own investments. The Church Property Trustees are yet to make a decision.

At a regional level more could be done, says Rev Cate Burton, St Peters in the City Tauranga assistant minister. Cate, 29, was one of six young people funded by the Church to attend the 2016 Ecology and Hope Conference, held at Carey Baptist College, Auckland in January. Academic in focus, the conference was light on practical ideas but challenging theologically, she says.

"I loved the idea of ecological readings [of Scripture]," she says. "Like in Jeremiah,

God stirring up the oceans. What if God is being playful? It's like feminist readings of Scripture, you have to delve into what's not explicitly stated and see it with fresh eyes."

Cate says that more work is needed to integrate the theological with the practical. She points to a collaborative project in Tauranga between the church and the Good Neighbour Trust to build community gardens.

"In the past year two gardens have been started, at Bethlehem and Welcome Bay," she says. "I've just suggested to my senior minister that we should also be thinking about eco design in the building projects that are coming up in Tauranga."

Hannah North, 20, of Mahurangi Church put her hand up for the Ecology and Hope Conference to find out more about how faith, theology and conservation can work together. The day, she says, gave her a wider stance on the intrinsic ethics of conservation.

"I already felt we're conserving the land, plants and animals for future generations, but the conference pushed me to see ecology as God's creation, so why would we destroy it?"

There were further challenges for her related to eschatology. "We discussed

secularism versus theology and different views about ecology, how the eschatology of the coming of the kingdom affects the way we treat the earth," she explains. "If it's not going to last, is there a point to conservation?"

Hannah also studied at Laidlaw in 2015 and has been active in local conservation projects such as tree planting at Tawharanui Regional Park. Hannah will be preaching at her church in Mahurangi in March on ecology. She sees the Church as lacking sufficient emphasis on its relationship to the land. An increased focus, she says, could bridge the gap between generations and bring more young people into the Church.

"Even though the connection should be a two-way street, we want to be met where we are."

For the first time the World Economic Forum survey on Global Risks identified the top risk to the global economy as "failure to prepare for climate change". In New Zealand only 23.9 per cent mentioned this top risk as a factor.

"The Kiwi dream is having a beach house, an SUV and motor boat," says Jordan. "It's almost taboo to impose on that. Until coastal areas submerge or the dairy industry suffers I don't think we'll see significant change."

Ally Graves, 18, of St Albans Presbyterian Palmerston North, who also attended the Ecology and Hope conference, says climate change is “the elephant in the room” for Kiwis.

“I don’t think Paris achieved much and New Zealand’s reaction is pathetic, ignoring agriculture because that’s our economic base,” she says. “Farming isn’t being done sustainably in this country. The older generation is doing what it’s always done. People need to be more aware and take a stand, to change their lifestyle and stop buying products that cause harm.”

Ally has been a vegan for the past eight years and became involved in environmental issues through her stance on eating meat. A student at Laidlaw, Ally attended the conference out of concern that the Church hasn’t addressed environment and faith.

“Christians have the view that God will provide,” she says, “but there needs to be a stronger, more vocal Christian perspective and more done to inform people. God has given some of us the passion to fix things, not to be passive.”

Liam Boardman, 20, of the Village Church Christchurch, also attended the Ecology and Hope conference. Liam is studying history and political science at Canterbury University and sees the Church as being in a formative stage of responding to climate change.

“There’s always been support for poverty and weakness but issues affecting the environment have been sidelined because of the tension between science and religion,” he thinks. “We shy away from a deeper analysis in case the facts of science collide with our faith. We want to reject the bits that don’t fit our beliefs, and don’t know how to support climate change work while keeping within the wheelhouse of our faith.”

A talk at the conference by Caritas, demonstrating the disproportionate effect climate change is having on Pacific nations and the poor in general was, for Liam, an obvious way to connect the environment with the Church’s traditional concern with poverty and overseas mission. He sees the Catholic Church as being further advanced in synthesising this relationship, particularly through the papal encyclical published last year. The encyclical is in line with the Church’s submission to the government on the consultation for setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target.

The main issue says Elissa Shaw, 18, also of the Village Church, is finding the balance between development and sustainability. Elissa has been working on transitional projects in Christchurch following the earthquakes. Working with Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble has given her an insight into the connection between nature and hope. “Hope is in taking action,” she says.

Elissa agrees with Jordan that the millennials either have post-modern malaise and are giving up because it is too hard, or they are taking the issue of planetary survival seriously. Conference keynote speaker Professor Celia Deane-Drummond was helpful, she explains, in offering novel ways for activists to attract attention.

“She told us about Oil Free Otago, who held a funeral for fossil fuels outside an oil exploration meeting, which was cool and different. She gave me hope by showing that people were doing things at grass roots level that made a difference.”

Dr Andrew Shepherd is national co-director of A Rocha Aotearoa NZ, the Christian-based charity focused on conservation. He was one of the speakers at the Ecology and Hope conference. The biggest issues of our time, he says, are ecology and economic inequality and young people will be the ones to face the realities of what’s being described as “the 6th great extinction”.

“They’re already switched on because the issues are upfront and central in their education,” Andrew says, “but they lack the freedom to respond as they don’t have agency within the Church body, which tends to see ecology as tangential.”

Andrew believes that this theological dissonance between the education system and the Church on ecology is one of two key challenges for young people. The second, he says, is the effects of the digital age and consumption.

“I’m concerned that young people’s attachment to their screens puts them at risk of their imaginations of what the world could be becoming emasculated by large consumerist corporations dominating their thinking,” he explains.

“Hashtag activism” is a term coined for being politically active on social media. This kind of activism is often judged as narcissistic or lazy. “Liking a post on Facebook or signing an online petition doesn’t change much or count as action,” says Michael Jessup, 18, who has just graduated from Year 13 at

Pakuranga College and attends St Andrew’s Howick.

He was a member of the student-initiated Environmental Council and attends Auckland Council’s Make a Difference (MAD) leadership programme that nurtures MADsters. One of his passions is to make environmental videos and post them online. He entered a three-minute clip on marine litter into a competition run by the Foundation for Environmental Education and was invited to present it at a conference in Cyprus in October 2014, with 40 other young people.

“I thought the international arena would be way better,” he reflects, “but the stuff they were talking about isn’t new. It made me realise New Zealand is at the forefront of environmental action.”

Euan Nisbet, 18, also of St Andrew’s and also on the Environmental Council is now studying sustainable agriculture at Massey University. He supports Michael’s awareness work but prefers to do practical projects. For the past couple of years Euan has been involved through his local scout group with planting native trees on Motuihe Island in the Hauraki Gulf. The Motuihe Trust and DOC have been reforesting parts of the island since 2003 and have released rare native bird species on the predator-free island.

He gets hope from walking along parts of the reforested island and seeing how much the first plantings have already grown. “You see the end game and the impact. It’s not such a hard thing to do, to plant trees,” he points out.

Hope, says Andrew Shepherd, is what the Church needs to be instilling in young people. “We need a theology that fires their imagination, so they become people of hope. Christianity can bring a unique element to ecological issues by telling a story than inspires ultimate hope in God’s greater purpose.”

Jordan Redding sees the Church’s unique role as providing a moral story that inspires everyone to take responsibility for our earthly existence.

“When I read the Scripture I see Jesus helping us to reconcile and renew God’s good creation, not helping us to escape. Jesus was resurrected in body and was concerned with earthly restoration, so the story of Christ gives us hope that God’s creation can be restored,” he explains. “The language of lament and confession also speaks powerfully. ‘We got things wrong and we’re sorry. Help us transform and participate in something new.’”

Jade Reidy Spanz

Churches offer fellowship and hospitality at Christmas



These young performers were among the different cultural groups that performed at Mahurangi's Presbyterian's Pasifika Festival just before Christmas.

The Christmas story can help us respond to world events such as terrorism and the refugee crisis. Churches around the country helped spread its message of 'fear not' in many helping ways.

A pop-up Christmas store was a novel form of social outreach by the Breakfast Club's Steven and Brenda Farrelly. Supported by St Columba at Botany Church, the Farrellys offered up to 200 of east Auckland's most needy families the chance to shop for free or get free food hampers and sponsored presents.

"The past two years we put on a Christmas banquet. The first year we had 260 people and the second we had 600 people," says Steve. "This year we couldn't get a venue big enough so we organised the Christmas store instead at Glen Innes Primary."

The families were identified by local social workers. As well as a hamper, each family was given three banana boxes to go and collect ingredients for after Christmas, such as mince, rice, chickpeas and tinned food.

"Kids often go hungry during the holiday period because there's no support available from the school or from government departments," Steve points out. "The kids eat everything in the first couple of weeks, so the banana boxes are essential."

The Farrellys started the Breakfast Club five years ago, after being asked by Randwick School to address its falling school roll, as parents couldn't afford to send their kids to school and feed them.

This year they had 50 volunteers working together on 23 December, in the store or at a pamper area for the mums or with the children. It was an emotional time, Steve reflects.

"The mums were saying, 'Why are we getting this? We don't deserve this, and they don't want anything in return'. The more we gave, the more was donated, and in the end we gave up. Jesus won," Steve laughs. "It was like having your prayers answered before they're asked. These families had the best Christmas they've had in a long time. We don't push the Bible at them. It's Jesus with skin on."

In other parts of the country, the emphasis was more on community and connection than alleviating poverty. At Mairangi and Castor Bay, the church offered relaxed, interactive events that Rev Caleb Hardie says were designed to get his congregation laughing. In the lead up to Christmas, a children's play gives youngsters aged 3-14 a subtle message of "don't forget the reason for the season".

"We throw a bunch of costumes at them and a few props to create a Christmas scene, based on the old 'don't forget the baby'," he explains. "We then add a heap of other stuff like surfboards and barbecues until at the end the baby can hardly be seen."

A choir service with carols also offers two children the chance to hand out strawberries, fruit mince pies and cherries along with communion. For the first time those attending the service

could light a candle in memory of loved ones, a gesture that was moving for many, says Caleb.

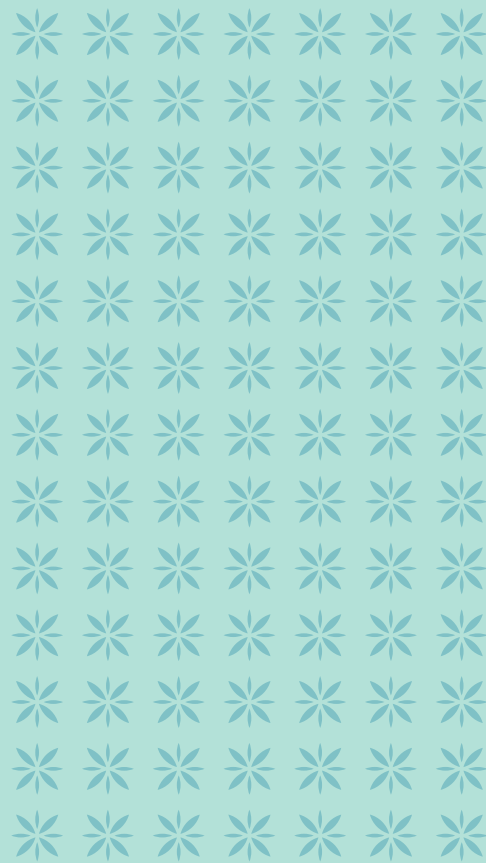
The Christmas Eve and day services are designed to unpack the Christmas story. "They're an opportunity for family visitors to experience what's familiar to them from the past but also to show that the story evolves and there is always something new to learn," he says. "It's a special day for them."

In the lead up to Christmas at Calvin Community Church in Gore, the church offers a Carols in the Park night and a Christmas story gathering for children in the community who don't normally attend church.

"We re-tell the Christmas story and the kids act out various parts," says Rev Keith Hooker.

On the day itself, a community Christmas dinner attracts over 100 guests. "A team of volunteers from the church does the cooking and contribute financially," explains Keith. "Different people come each year and most are lonely rather than needing to be fed. Some of the volunteers also use the day because they're on their own, so it's a chance to connect."

Community connection also featured strongly at Mahurangi Church in Warkworth, which has a large Pasifika congregation. On 28 November, the church and Mahu Vision Community Trust held a special concert and feast at Mahurangi College celebrating Pasifika



culture and customs. It drew a crowd of around 600 people, primarily from Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu.

This is the fourth time the church has organised the concert, which this year also featured a marae performance. Minister Nick McLennan and coordinator Neville Johnson say that while Pacific peoples make up a significant percentage of the local population, it isn't always easy for them to get together. The event is a much-needed opportunity for those living and working locally to reconnect with their culture.

"It's fairly complex to organise but it went smoothly and was well appreciated," says Nick. "It's an integral part of our annual package."

At St James in Waihi the Christmas day event at the community hall is no longer organised by the church. "We don't get involved as a ministry. It's no longer a Christian outreach," says Rev David Balchin. Outreach at Christmas happens in partnership with the Salvation Army on market day in Waihi, when both churches preach an open air message. Christmas Eve and day services are held annually on the beach, which attract large numbers of holiday makers.

Auckland's Chinese Presbyterian Church also caters to a migrant population at Christmas. The YMCA, which is located next to the church, is predominantly used as a hostel by overseas students, and the church decided to give the hostel's residents an experience of a Kiwi

Christmas. While 40 invitations were issued, the dinner became a loaves and fishes affair, with over 100 young people turning up from a range of continents.

Lunch organiser Jean Wong says it was the talk of breakfast for the following week. "I heard they loved it and were so happy because they expected to be given Asian food and instead got pavlova, ham and all the trimmings."

The free dinner also gave church leaders a chance to get to know the young people, and encourage them to pop into the church, which many of them do. A monthly pot luck dinner with games afterwards also helps this temporary congregation to feel more at home.

The Gisborne Presbyterian parish put out an invitation to its annual lunch through community agencies earlier in the year, and was expecting around 90 people to what Rev Fraser Paterson calls "God's Love Day".

"The congregation provides the food and we get plenty of volunteers," says Fraser.

At Knox/St Columba in Lower Hutt the annual Christmas day lunch was in its 27th year but had a new event organiser following the merger of the two churches.

Lester Fensom was impressed both by the willingness of the congregation to help, and also with the venue itself.

"We started planning for it after Labour Weekend by calling for interest from helpers. People were so ready to muck in. It was great, he says. "The café and

commercial kitchen at Knox, along with ample parking, make it the ideal venue for the event."

Around 250 guests were fed by 50 volunteers with quality food. Two teenagers played live cello music while lunch was being served. Some who were unable to drive were picked up and brought to the event. Takeaway packs were also delivered to local shelters. St Peter and Paul Catholic Church gave over 25 hot roasts to the event, which was also sponsored by a local law firm. Aside from the food, congregation members made Christmas cards and donated gifts.

Lester is accustomed to managing large cash flows and says that the uncertainty of the budget was new for him, and a challenge to his faith. "The Lord answered my prayers and it all just worked out," he says. "It was a positive day and an opportunity to share the gospel message and answer ministry questions."

On Boxing Day Lester and two other volunteers returned to Knox and spent hours cleaning and restoring the venue to a pristine state, "so you'd never know we'd been there," he says. As a follow-up, he has been putting together a "standard operating procedure" manual so that anyone coming in fresh in future has a better idea of how to run the event.

"It's a framework that myself and the volunteers have the freedom to act within," he explains.

Jade Reidy Spanz

Church offers fellowship for farmers

If you were in any doubt about the importance of farming to the New Zealand economy, consider these numbers: farmers make up less than 4 percent of the population but generate around 61 percent of our export trade, which brings in about \$30 billion a year.

But as any farmer knows, making a living from the land isn't easy. Weather events, price fluctuations, disease and crop failures can all play havoc not only with the bottom line, but also with one's mental health.

This is particularly the case in the dairy industry where drops in markets and milk payouts over the past few years have seen an increase in farm sales and, sadly, suicides.

It was this perilous nature of farming that prompted the Rev John Wilkie, pastor of Hawera Presbyterian Parish, to extend the hand of friendship to around 80 local farmers with a dinner at the Presbyterian Centre in late November 2015.

"Our economy relies on agriculture and we wanted to show farmers that we appreciate them and recognise that they've been through hard times with flooding and a low dairy payout," says John.

"Sometimes we all need an injection of fresh ideas and perspective in our lives because there can be times when you can't see the wood for the trees. What better way than by inviting someone who had experienced the difficulties of farming?"

Doug Avery, a Marlborough farmer and motivational speaker who specialises in rural resilience, was invited as the keynote speaker.

Doug suggested the "power of now" as a powerful way to navigate through rural-related depression.

"When you get really low, the way out is to work on the 'now'," Doug told farmers. "Make a list of five things that really have



Hawera Presbyterian organised a dinner for South Taranaki farmers where motivational speaker Doug Avery (pictured) offered practical advice to beat depression during tough dairy seasons.

to be done. Choose the most important and then throw the other four in the fire. Complete the one task remaining because that will be the first step on the road out of depression."

Doug knows what he's talking about: while working on the family farm in Lake Grassmere, near Blenheim, he was stuck with depression after a bad summer drought. He ended up retreating into himself for five years.

"The farm became less and less productive as I tried to do it all myself. The future increasingly looked bleak."

It took some wise words from a farming consultant before Doug was able to fight his way out of the darkness.

"I saw a spark of light and started a plan about how I could farm my way out of it. The key was taking it step-by-step and focusing on what I could do right now."

Thanks to that strategy, Doug was able to find his way back to health and happiness and now successfully runs the farm with his two sons. He's even doubled the value of production in three years, as well as lining his mantelpiece with a number of farming awards.

John says the audience was grateful to hear from someone who had made it through the hard times and particularly enjoyed the way Doug related quotes from All Blacks coach, Steve Hansen, to their situation.

"Steve Hansen always says, the question is 'What do we have to do right now?' Making that first successful step when in the depths of darkness is critical to climbing out of it. Think about what you need to do now and forget the rest," says Doug.

Hawera Presbyterian Parish raised funds for the dinner via a grant from a local community trust and sponsorship; the parish also contributed, funding a dinner for two and movie passes.

John is quick to add that the dinner wasn't a church service or a recruiting drive.

"It definitely wasn't a bid to get new parishioners or preach at people. It was simply about showing these guys that people care. If you're doing it tough it's easy to think the whole world is against you. We wanted these farmers to know that we care and hopefully just knowing that has made a difference to them."

Sharon Stephenson **Spanz**

Moderator looks forward with hope

When Rev Richard Dawson was voted Moderator-Elect, he told the General Assembly 2014 his intended approach would be to listen a lot and talk a little. As the leadership handover time approaches, Richard is articulating his vision for the forthcoming two years.

His theme will be 'hope'. The theme, he says, means to feel one has a future. Without hope, life loses meaning, momentum and importance.

"Hope has an eternal aspect. Paul said, 'Faith, hope and love abide, and the greatest of these is love.' We tend to dismiss hope as being less important and overlook how important it is to ordinary folk living daily life. People lose heart when they can't see a future worth living – and in the Church that's very much the case."

The Church, he says, has suffered from poor self-image for a long time, comparing itself negatively to fast-growing churches.

"We've been swimming against the current in society, mired in parochial concerns and arguing over things that can't be fixed in a hurry. Andrew Norton [current Church Moderator] has been tremendous for the Church through his focus on making mission possible and on reshaping the Church," he affirms. "I just want to back up the horse a bit. In order to motivate people we need to recover a sense of hope. We're a good news Church. Without hope we can't promote our own story."

Richard (57) is Dunedin born and bred and a self-described "baby boomer who was dragged kicking and screaming into the kingdom of God". He graduated from what was then Knox Theological Hall in 1988 and ministered at Stirling/Kaitangata/Lovells Flat from 1990-1999 before moving to his current role at St Stephen's Leith Valley. The Church, he says, is the hope for the world and his personal goal is to see it so hopeful we're willing to take risks for the Church.

"Hope provides the foundation for risk, for mission. Here in the Otago and Southland Synod we're celebrating our 150-year anniversary. Most of those early Presbyterians who journeyed here at considerable risk were missionaries with hope – they just weren't called that."

In 2002 Richard helped launch studentsoul a ministry to Otago University and Otago Polytech students. His first task as Moderator will be to see the Church learn to speak young people's language so they in turn can believe the Church is relevant to them. Richard has three children of his own: Elizabeth, Philip and Michael, and is married to Fran Dawson.

"It's not that hard, really it isn't," he encourages. "Each generation relies on a point of difference, which ultimately isn't that different."

Richard also wants to better acknowledge the hard work undertaken by church members and to give more support to rural presbyteries. "I think our rural parishes are highly under-



Rev Richard Dawson

valued and under-resourced. In my role as Moderator I want to encourage those in small places."

His leadership style is to lead from the front. "I enjoy getting into the trenches and getting my hands dirty. I intend to lead with a hope that produces confidence in the Gospel and in the calling to Christ, to be an inspiration."

He sees the Moderator's role in the Church as having grown tremendously in the past six to 10 years yet the support structure hasn't kept pace. "It's organisationally isolated; I won't have an official team, which is something the Church needs to think more seriously about."

Later this year Richard intends to have for parishes a multi-age study guide and a video on the theme of hope to explain his vision that the Church is the hope for world.

"I don't think God has given up on us. If we can return to a hopeful focus on Christ we can do more than simply survive. But we have to work at it. I liken the Church to a garden, he adds. "One thing I've learned from gardening is the garden never stands still. If you don't get your hands dirty and pull out the weeds, something else will take over."

Richard served as moderator of the Synod of Otago and Southland, as well as on the Church's Council of Assembly and National Assessment Committee. He was convener of the committee which created Kupu Whakapono. He assumes the Moderator role in November.

Jade Reidy [@spanz](#)

150 YEARS

SESQUICENTENNIAL FOR SYNOD



Henry Barton, former General Assembly Moderator and pictured with wife Dora, is among those who feature in latest Synod history book, which is being published to mark the Synod's 150th year.

In April this year, the Synod of Otago and Southland will celebrate 150 years.

On Friday 15 and Saturday 16 April, the Synod will hold a special AGM and is keen for church leaders and members who feel a connection to the region to join in.

The theme for the weekend of celebrations is "Walking the Future. Vision. Confidence.". Synod executive officer Fergus Sime says the theme was developed by the moderator-designate, the Rev Peter Dunn, to encapsulate the focus on looking ahead, rather than dwelling on the past.

"It's great that we've made it to 150, and we're grateful to God and our forebears," says Fergus, "but the celebration is not intended as a reunion. Our guest speakers will, of course, be offering up learnings from the past, and there will be historical displays. The emphasis, however, will be to have people go away feeling inspired about the future."

Bookings for the two-day Dunedin event at John McGlashan College are essential as capacity is limited to 150 and the event is catered. All events are free of charge.

The Synod covers the lower third of the South Island, some 80,000km² and 72 parishes. To capture its more recent history, the Synod has commissioned a new book. Yvonne Wilkie was the obvious choice to write it, given her 20 years as the Church's archivist and her in-depth knowledge of previous publications. The audience for her forthcoming book will be a general synod reader rather than a committed "Synodite".

"This book will be about people and events," Yvonne says. "I'm trying to give an insight into the personal involvement of a number of people in the working of the Synod."

Four previous significant volumes have covered aspects of the Synod's history but Yvonne feels there is a wider perspective available and new stories to tell about women, Māori, Pasifika and the Chinese mission. She is also focusing on the increased role of the laity, including the first lay clerk who was appointed in 1981 as the Synod began to loosen the constraints of a constitutional focus.

"Previous books have covered the first 50 years and trust funds in depth, so mine starts in 1901 when the Northern and Southern churches united", explains Yvonne. "Henry Barton is a new, visionary character and I've found out quite a lot about attempts to form a Māori pastorate."

An enthusiastic supporter of both women and overseas missions, Barton became General Assembly Moderator in 1935 and was ahead of his time in battling against conformity in the Church.

"He saw a vision for the Synod that the Church didn't see," says Yvonne, "and if we locate that into our theme of Walking the Future, his lesson to us is not to get stuck in a rut."

Yvonne's book will be launched at General Assembly 2016 in November. Until then, passionate historians can follow progress at her blog ywilkieblog.wordpress.com

Previous Synod publications:

- *The Story of the Otago Church and Settlement*, C. Stuart Ross, Dunedin, 1887.
- *50 Years Syne: a Jubilee Memorial of the Presbyterian Church of Otago*, James Chisholm, Dunedin, 1898.
- *The Story of the Otago Free Church Settlement, 1848 to 1948: A Century's Growth by a Southern Sea*, John Collie, Christchurch, 1948.
- *The Church in a special Colony: a History of the Synod of Otago and Southland from 1866 to 1991*, John McKean, Dunedin, 1994.

SYNOD AGM PROGRAMME

VENUE: John McGlashan College, 2 Pilkington St, Maori Hill, Dunedin.

FRIDAY, 15 APRIL: daytime AGM business sessions with talks from Prof Alan Torrance of University of St Andrew's School of Divinity, Scotland and Assoc Prof. John Stenhouse of Otago University; evening celebration (public event) with speakers Prof Alan Torrance and Rev Peter Dunn.

SATURDAY, 16 APRIL: (public event) opening worship and talk by Prof Alan Torrance, followed by morning and afternoon workshops, and a final service of worship including communion.

Editor's note: To attend any of the events or workshops email synod.otago.southland@xtra.co.nz or phone the Synod office on 03 477 7365.

Jade Reidy Spanz

IT'S A CALLING



Murray Brown pictured in front of St Alban's in Palmerston North where he is the youth pastor.

A cemetery isn't the usual place for a career epiphany, but that's where Murray Brown first became convinced of God's call to youth ministry.

Thirty years later, the St Alban's youth pastor and Presbytery Central's youth enabler is still enjoying what he does.

Wellington-born Murray, now 60, says he left Victoria University with a statistics degree but little idea of what he wanted to do with his life.

He fell into the banking industry, where he remained for seven years, helping out with his local Methodist church youth group in his spare time.

One day, while wandering around Karori Cemetery, the penny dropped.

"I knew I wanted to do something that would live on after I died," says Murray. "You can either live for yourself or you can pursue a life that makes a difference to others and that day, I realised that I wanted my life to mean something."

That decision led him away from banking and into youth ministry.

"I couldn't believe someone would pay me to work with youth in the church," he laughs.

After a year working with youth at Whangaparaoa Baptist Church, Murray took up a role in Palmerston North, where he's lived ever since.

"It was pretty overwhelming at the beginning, because 120 kids showed up at youth group the first night and I had to figure it out as I went along. But God directed me to the right people and I pulled together a team to help me."

Murray stayed in that role for over a decade and even now is amazed at God's work in increasing numbers at that parish to more than 300, helping youth to grow in their faith and building a 30-strong leadership team.

A role training youth workers in the Baptist Church led him to YouthTRAIN, where he not only developed training materials, he also worked with youth pastors and interns of all denominations.

"I worked with YouthTRAIN for over 15 years, developing resources and running training programmes for youth leaders in New Zealand, Australia and Asia."

In 2014, his call to the Presbyterian Church came in the form of his current role at St Alban's in Palmerston North.

"After so many years training youth workers, it was great to get back to the coalface of working with youth. I did worry that I might be too old but I soon found that age made little difference."

In fact, age is at the heart of one of Murray's biggest initiatives at St Alban's.

"Intergenerational' is a buzz word in youth ministry at the moment, but I strongly believe that youth ministry should be totally integrated into the church, not just something that hangs 'out the side'. At St Alban's we've worked to get people of all ages involved in our youth ministry. It's about being strategic and intentional in finding older people with leadership qualities who have a love for young people."

Young people meet in small groups up to six times a term. These groups are led by young adults, often in their 20s, who serve as role models. A mentor in each group – usually in their 30s, 40s or 50s – is also present to offer support and parental wisdom.

"And then there's the intercessors group, made up of people in their 60s and 70s, who come along to youth group at least twice a year to chat to the youth but who are also committed to praying for our young people."

This intergenerational approach helps to create more of a "sense of family" amongst St Albans' 350 or so parishioners and 40 youth group members, believes Murray.

Since May last year, Murray has also taken on a part-time role as youth enabler for Presbytery Central – a role that he shares with a colleague. The role covers Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Manawatu, Whanganui and Taranaki providing training for youth leaders, as well as consultancy and advisory services.

Ask this father of two and step-father of three what keeps motivating him after 30 years and he'll say it's the same thing that struck him in the cemetery 30 years ago.

"It's wanting to do something that helps others. I love the optimism and idealism of youth and making a difference in their lives. It's something I want to keep doing as long as I'm able..."

Sharon Stephenson [Spanz](#)

Press Go support helps breathe new life into parish

Knox Dannevirke's 100-year-old wooden hall has been rebuilt with Press Go support, and is at the heart of the church's mission.

Following the Christchurch earthquakes, churches around the country have been faced with hard decisions about which buildings can be strengthened to meet new seismic standards and which will have to be demolished. Knox Dannevirke had already been considering an upgrade to its ageing hall but the report by the church's engineering consultants gave the final impetus to action.

"Our hall came in well below national standards," says treasurer Troy Gerbich. "It wasn't even insurable, let alone future-proofed."

The building forms the central third of the church's complex and had become semi-functional over time. The church engaged Roger Twentyman to chair the hall project finance task group. Roger, an ex-CEO of the local district council, provided expertise and leadership over the project at a crucial time. Press Go was, at that time, just getting started.

"We knew Knox Waitara had secured funding from Press Go for their complex," says Troy, "so step one was to meet with them and discuss how you raise funds in a small community."

Knox Dannevirke's congregation has 120 active members, which was not enough people to raise the necessary \$580,000 needed to upgrade the hall, kitchen, toilets and side rooms. At General Assembly 2012, Troy then met with Press Go.

"Waitara was their first major project. They did a fantastic job that set a benchmark," says Troy, "but Press Go realised that giving out funds across the country would drain their resources rather quickly, so Andrew Norton said to me, if you can raise x amount we will facilitate you borrowing the rest through the Church, and will pay the interest."

The church took on this mission and did pledging runs, which provided good traction, and received grants from community trusts.

"Press Go partnered with us and was instrumental in engaging PSDS. They gave us the vision to step out in faith and the surety of guidance and involvement," says Troy.

Part of the deal was to complete the project in stages, to demonstrate to the property trustees that the church was capable of delivering. The loan from what was then the Presbyterian



PressGo
Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Savings and Development Society (PSDS), now the Baptist Savings and Development Society, is being repaid over five years.

Press Go's vision is that when missional imaginings come into being, people experience the presence of God, new disciples are made and fresh life resonates within the church. Troy says that the new hall complex with its commercial kitchen and capacity for 300 has become a lot more attractive since it re-opened a year ago and is enabling Knox to further its mission.

"We're so pleased to be not limited to the worship area now the building is complete and are now back to hosting multiple activities, even tangi for other churches whose facilities aren't big enough."

Activities include children's and youth ministries, women's groups, organised meals, weddings and funerals, an op shop, galas and fashion shows. Local retail outlet Ballantynes hosts an annual fashion show that the church's 'mature' women participate in.

Knox Dannevirke also has strong links with other churches in the area and hosts combined services three to four times a year. Its own congregation is growing, says Troy, which is a sign of a healthy church.

"Increasingly we're seeing young couples and families attending. We're family friendly here at Knox and have a good variety of relevance to the younger generation. There's a parents' room off the main worship area for parents to have time out if they need it, but still be part of the service."

Troy says it's now hard to remember the days before they had a brand new facility. "It's been such a natural transition that it seems like we've been using it for years."

Lisa Wells is the Press Go Catalyst. "I never cease to be amazed at the remarkable things that happen when we arrive at God's moment, ready for what he has in store!" she says.

To find out more about how Press Go can work with your parish, contact Lisa by email at Lisaw@presbyterian.org.nz or telephone 027 4455 723, or write to PO Box 13-103, Dunedin 9052.

Jade Reidy Spanz

Personal experience drives minister's call to social justice

What drove Rev Chris Barnard of Whakatane Presbyterian Church to become so involved in the issues in his community? He looked at the stats – and then took action.

"We wondered as a church what we could do to make a difference and touch people's lives.

"I started looking up the statistics in our area. The results were received by our congregation almost with disbelief – the levels of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, unemployed young people and disjointed families were so high.

"There were 48 different social agencies for people in need in Whakatane, but church members often didn't know what they were – and neither did the people who needed their help.

"Anne Overton and Jude Simpson from Presbyterian Support Northern spent some time with me brainstorming ideas on how to approach connecting people. We decided to start off by having a big party and inviting people to 'our house'. We called it the Heart to Heart Family Expo and Festival.

"We invited agencies to come and put up a table and display inside the hall. Outside, there was a party with sausage sizzle and hangi, bands and games and prizes. We designed and created a treasure hunt where families had to ask each agency about what they did. The top prizes were bikes for a girl and a boy. It was amazing to see the winners. 'Who – me?' They were stunned."

Chris says that "one year we had the gang members come. A gang leader said, 'I just brought the missus along but it was so much fun I stayed the whole day.'"



Rev Chris Barnard helping out at the Heart to Heart Family Expo led by Whakatane Presbyterian.

Heart to Heart is now in its fifth year. "Last time we got through over 700 sausages and 350 hangi meals – all free. We say, 'When you have a party at our house, you don't pay'. That flabbergasted people. We made up hampers and called out numbers.

"It had a huge effect on the older parishioners. They would come and say, 'What an exciting day. We thought this would be difficult'. Some people are concerned about the cost. I say let's look beyond the cost and embrace the opportunity. Some attendees have since come to church or other functions."

"Last year we had a survey with the agencies and they had had much more contact with the community and had much more open communication with their clients than previously."

The church has also joined with Prison Fellowship to work with families of prisoners. It puts on a Christmas roast dinner for the children, with gifts and a clown. Chris says the children ask questions like, "Are you doing this just for us?"

Chris is part of the Eastern Bay of Plenty Family Violence Network run by Family Violence Response Coordinator Helen Holt. He has also been involved in starting a non-religious group called MATES Network for Men and is looking at creating a drop-in centre where men can share their stories and life issues.

His empathy for those suffering domestic violence and issues of broken families comes from his own personal experience growing up in South Africa.

"My family was devastated by domestic violence. I had to endure severe neglect and physical, mental and emotional abuse. On many occasions I witnessed my mother being beaten, abused and demeaned, and had no power to defend her. The day came when as a young teenager I watched my mother dying from all the beatings she had endured.

"At my lowest point in my teenage life, I took refuge in a little church in our village. I encountered the most amazing people. They took me in and cared for me, nurtured me and introduced me to Jesus. I experienced the love and acceptance of Jesus through these humble people. They restored by dignity and gave me a second chance in life."

Chris was ordained as a minister in 1990, having been a headmaster and a project manager on an oil rig, and came to New Zealand with his wife Louise, following his son Steven, in 2009.

He now has four congregations including Knox, Ohope, and Waimana. At Waimana they hold cross-cultural services with Tamiana and Honey Thrupp. Edgecumbe Presbyterian has just recently become incorporated with the other three congregations, with Noel Buchanan as the pastor.

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

Dr Rod Wilson keynote speaker for General Assembly 2016



Dr Rod Wilson

“And now these three remain: Faith, hope and love. But the greatest is love”, says St Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Canadian pastor, counsellor, consultant, and academic Dr Rod Wilson, who will be keynote speaker at General Assembly 2016, says he sees plenty of emphasis on faith and love, but too little on hope.

“These are tumultuous times both in the culture and the church. In such a season we need to pay attention to faith and love, but I wonder if we have forgotten about hope and its central place in the Christian gospel,” he says.

“Do we as individuals embody and exemplify hope? Do our churches preach about hope but also live it incarnationally? Do our denominations and ministries get bogged down in internal matters to such a degree that we lose our interest and capacity to bring hope to our secular world?”

These questions, and many others, will be addressed by Dr Wilson at General Assembly, 16 to 20 November 2016 in Dunedin.

He last came to New Zealand in 2012 when he spoke at a number of events, including the South Island Ministry Conference.

Dr Wilson says he was very pleased to be asked by incoming Moderator the Rev Richard Dawson to speak on the subject of hope at the upcoming General Assembly.

“My professional roles have placed me in situations in which hope has been missing – in both people and in systems. But I also observe that many denominations and churches are losing hope. Internal struggles, bureaucratic tensions and relational challenges rob church members of vision and clarity and mire them in deep hopelessness.

“Sadly, the culture is moving in the same direction. While many in contemporary culture have a decent lifestyle and various creature comforts, there is a vacuous sense within that would not be described as hopeful.

“If the church and the culture are not experiencing hope, where can we go? It is this question that should be of great interest to all of us who are seeking to serve Jesus Christ. Biblical hope is crucial to the gospel as it provides us with a ‘confidence in the unseen,’ a holy optimism that is not rooted in our personality but in God, who is a God of hope.

“Because we are living in a post-modern culture where cerebral truth has been replaced by personal experience, and truth centred in Christ is secondary to subjective understanding, the need for hope may be greater than it has ever been.

“But it is not just a matter of going to the culture simply to preach about hope; we need to understand it deeply, live it incarnationally, and communicate it in a way that reflects we are committed to it.

“I hope that at the end of the General Assembly, attendees will have a clear sense that:

- the leaders and speakers are people of hope;
- hope is rooted deeply in the character of God;
- the biblical record takes hope seriously;
- the truth of hope needs to be preached and expressed incarnationally;
- and that we see that as Christians we have a responsibility to bring hope to the culture.

Dr Wilson's training is in English literature, psychology and theology. He has two Masters degrees, one in clinical-counselling psychology and one in theology, and two doctoral degrees, one in clinical-counselling psychology and one in divinity (honorary). He has worked as a psychologist in both the secular and sacred world, and has done much clinical work with pastors and Christian leaders. He has been a pastor in three different churches, and has served as a professor in three different theological institutions.

For the past 15 years he has been president and professor of counselling and psychology at Regent College in Vancouver, and has taught a number of New Zealand ministers during that time.

He is now working with seven different organisations, including A Rocha International, in teaching-pastoral-consulting roles seeking to help individuals and groups flourish in their work. He has just completed a book with Peter Harris – co-founder of A Rocha International – entitled *Keeping Faith in Fundraising*. This book examines the “industry” of Christian philanthropy and raises questions as to how it might be changed to be more consistent with the nature of the gospel.

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

Small miracles



What's in a name? In the case of Small Miracles, the childcare centre in St Heliers, Auckland, quite a lot.

Jill Kayser, the Presbyterian Church's national Kids Friendly Coach helped set up the pre-school 16 years ago in her then role as the St Heliers Presbyterian Church Children and Families Ministry Leader. "We decided to name the childcare centre Small Miracles because it encapsulated what we believe about children. They are truly one of God's miracles and a gift to our communities," says Jill.

Prior to this St Heliers ran a small licensed pre-school but it only catered for short-term drop-offs and wasn't adequate for the local community.

As there was only one other childcare centre in the suburb there was the community need for a better service, so in 1999, the then minister, the Rev Martin Baker and the church's session, decided to build a purpose-built childcare centre in the unused space under the church.

Since it opened, the pre-school has been licensed to care for 30 two-to-five-year-old children, including both half and full day sessions. Four staff help run the centre which aims to provide children with the skills to gain confidence and a sense of self worth.

When current minister of St Heliers, the Rev Pauline Stewart, took up her role 11 years ago, Small Miracles was already doing well.

"The sense of ministry with which Small Miracles is run is wonderful, as is the close relationship with the church community," says Pauline

Joining the children in play: Rev Pauline Stewart (left) minister at St Heliers and Susan Piaggi, director of Small Miracles at St Heliers.

"The director, Susan Piaggi, is pivotal in making Small Miracles relational to the church community and the staff buys into the culture of the whole organisation in reaching out and welcoming. They also do this for other cultures and languages, because where St Heliers was once predominantly European in the makeup of the families who brought their children, that is now not the case."

Making time to learn the children's names and be a part of Small Miracles' life is a priority for the leadership of the church, she adds.

Jill, who managed the centre for nine years until she took up her role with Kids Friendly in 2006, says from the start, the vision was for Small Miracles not to be just a pre-school but a ministry.

"We were very clear from day one about our vision, branding and what our core business is – and it's not childcare! Our core business is ministry and childcare is one of the many ways we minister. For us, it's all about being transparent and focused on a vision of providing quality child care that embraces Christian values but that is also open to people of all faiths."

Another key to their success is walking the walk. "It isn't just enough to say we're a ministry and leave it at that. If we say that then it's important we follow through and truly live the love of Christ in everything we do."

A plank to their success is in connecting the pre-school to the entire church community.

Most parishioners are involved in the pre-school and vice-versa. The pre-school is part of the wider church community and it's seen as important that everyone takes ownership of it. If, for example, something unexpected happens, such as one of the children's mothers getting sick, the church community swings into action providing a Christian response – such as pastoral care for the family by visiting them, dropping off meals or whatever else might be most needed.

With happy children and long waiting lists, there's much that other churches could learn from the Small Miracles story and practices.

With so few opportunities for church communities to minister to secular New Zealand, Small Miracles is a glowing example of one way to do this.

They must be doing something right, because Jill recalls a conversation she once had with a mother of one of the Small Miracles students.

"She told me she had searched all over Auckland for a suitable pre-school for her child but none of them felt right. As soon as she came to Small Miracles, she knew she'd found the right place. She asked me what it was about this place and I told her it was the love of Christ in action, which is exactly what drives all those involved with Small Miracles."

Sharon Stephenson Spanz



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THEOLOGYMATTERS

It takes a church to raise a minister

I am now three months into my placement as Principal of Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (KCML). My first day here was also the first day at school for my daughter. We were "newbies" together. As we set off that morning, I found myself thinking of the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child".

The proverb reminds us of the importance of relationships. Healthy communities, whether they are schools, churches or ministry colleges, offer a range of relationships. These relationships, at all sorts of levels, nurture growth. That is a positive take. Equally, there is a negative take: unhealthy communities offer a range of relationships which, because of their dysfunction and inhospitality, bring decline.

At my first KCML team meeting, I shared this sense of being new and asked the question: "If it takes a village to raise a child, does it take a church to raise a minister?" The question grabbed the team's attention. We found ourselves digging into Scripture. We noted the importance of relationships in the cross-cultural shifts that occurred in the church of Antioch and found ourselves giving thanks for mothers and grandmothers in the raising of Timothy.

We recalled with gratitude the individuals who had given each of us opportunities in ministry. We noted how certain churches and certain ministers keep cropping up in the call stories at national assessment weekend. My colleague, Geoff New recalled his farewell from Papakura East and the words of the session clerk: "We would not be the people we are now becoming without your ministry, and in some strange way you wouldn't be going to your new job at Knox except for the journey of obedience to God you have been able to take among us and with us". The notion that it takes a church to raise a minister was ringing true.

Theologically, Christians understand God in relationships. In the gospels we hear

stories of how Jesus relates to God and vice versa. In the Creed, we find images of "dynamic relations to characterize more specifically God's ways of relating to us" (David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*). God relates to us to create us, to reconcile us and to draw us into the making of all things new. As Christians, we worship God in relationships.

At the risk of being simplistic, let me sketch two models of theology matters.

One is an institutional model of education that expects Knox Centre to train ministers. This model might elevate ordination. Theology matters, but it risks becoming the domain of certain people, who read certain textbooks and gain certain qualifications. Perhaps this creates someone who runs the village.

Another is a relational model of education that expects the Presbyterian Church to train ministers. This model might elevate baptism. Theology matters for disciples, for all are called to love God's heart, soul and mind. Theological education belongs among the whole people of God, in song and in the workplace, across all the specified ministries of the church. Knox Centre remains, as one part of the village that raises the disciple.

This has implications for all of us. If the African proverb is true and it does indeed take a village to raise a child, then theology matters. Not for certain people in certain places, but for every disciple of Jesus, called in their baptism into the mission of God.

For discussion:

1. What Bible stories and images of God help you understand the proverb: "It takes a church to raise a minister?"
 2. What are the implications - for congregations, for theological colleges and the Presbyterian Church - of a relational model of education?
- Rev Dr Steve Taylor, principal Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Dunedin

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YOUTH MINISTRY WORKER

Three parishes in the western area of Wellington, Wadestown Presbyterian, Ngaio Union and Khandallah Presbyterian (The Hub) are looking to recruit a half-time Youth Ministry Worker to strengthen their joint ministries of faith. This role will have an emphasis on ensuring the needs of young people within the community are identified and developed. Along with a call to Youth Ministry you will share the Hub vision and direction.

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- Strong organisational skills and be effective in managing your time

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you are able to bring a fresh perspective and work with a blank sheet of paper to create a new approach to youth ministry across the three parishes and their communities then please contact the Reverend Ryhan Prasad, kpcrev@xtra.co.nz, for a job description or more information. **Applications will close on 28 February 2016.**

Minister prepares Church for future disasters

The Rev Martin Stewart, minister of the Village Church in Christchurch, sees a role for the Church in planning for disasters.

His message is: "If we are prepared for a disaster, we can help others when one occurs."

If we are not prepared, he says, we have to spend so much time looking after ourselves that we can't look after others.

Martin recently attended a Council for World Mission and Presbyterian Church in Taiwan sponsored workshop on Emergency Preparedness and Response. He attended because of his deep involvement in the process of recovery from the earthquakes in Canterbury, and has developed a passion for the subject.

He doesn't want to talk about the earthquakes themselves – though he mentions the injured parishioner who was almost killed when her chimney collapsed. Neither does he want to go into detail about how St Stephen's, the church where he and his wife Anne were ministers, was destroyed, and joined St Giles to form The Village Church. He certainly doesn't want to talk about the two years in which he spent 50 per cent of his time working with others on engineering and insurance related matters – a process that is not over yet.

He wants to talk about how the Church can be actively involved in planning for the next disaster in New Zealand.

At the workshop, he found that when it came to reading the paper he had prepared, with its detailed documentation, he did not want to do so. "It was all technical and all about ourselves. The more I listened to other people talking about disasters, I realised that because we weren't prepared most of our energy went into looking after ourselves when we should have been looking after other people."



Among the Pacific Churches represented at the CWM sponsored Taiwan disaster recovery workshop were (L to R) Afereti Uili, General Secretary Congregational Christian Church, Samoa; Ioelu Onesemo, Deputy General Secretary, Congregational Christian Church, American Samoa; Jonathan Tarip, Education Secretary and post-Cyclone Pam Coordinator, Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu; Kautoa Moloti, Secretary for Mission, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu; Jezza Agadio, Deputy General Secretary, Nauru Congregational Church and Rev Martin Stewart (not pictured).

He says that we are not prepared for emergencies.

"Because of that, we cannot action things fast enough to look out for the people who are suffering the most. You end up looking after your own because you haven't got the structure to say, 'Who is the most disadvantaged here? Are we advocating for them?'"

"In the Christchurch earthquakes, we just got caught up looking after our own – and our own are not the quarter of the city that is most deeply affected, the poorest quarter. Not a lot of the money circulating through Presbyterian channels got to the people in most need."

He says the challenge for the Church is preparing for future emergencies. He believes this is "an opportunity to do what we can do well".

Presbyteries could draw up a template of what was likely to happen in a disaster – "thinking about it both philosophically and in practical terms. We would ask ourselves: what would we be able to activate to help meet the need? A small group of two or three could craft something. It could be reviewed every few years.

"The single biggest thing in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake is the mobilisation of people to help those who are most affected. It's the first 48 hours when there are injured people that resources are most stretched. The neighbourhood can do a lot to come together and get over that initial hurdle.

"Churches, working with Civil Defence, could encourage people to create packs with water, torches, food, blankets and first aid kits, so that everyone has one and knows where they are."

The next biggest concern is having enough water in the crucial first days and later if pipes are broken and/or water is contaminated.

During the earthquakes Martin was involved in a private fundraising initiative with several churches through his own blog. People sent in money, and the initiative gave out 200 super-market vouchers worth a total of \$85,000, to people who lived in red-zoned, impoverished neighbourhoods.

"That was cool," says Martin. "It helped people immediately. It was generous rather than token. People burst into tears and said, 'We've never heard from anyone.' One said, 'We're going to have a family roast.' These were people who had water and sewerage on the surface of the footpath to their houses and were using communal toilets."

Martin says there are some standout examples of community service work during and after the earthquakes such as: St George's Iona Church with its "small-but-on-the-ground team" and Hornby's Hope Presbyterian Church, with its counselling and advocating services, work with the Ministry for Social Development and extensive door-to-door contacting to see how people were getting on.

Jane Tolerton Spanz

New director for Presbyterian Research Centre

Jane Thomsen's new role as director of the Presbyterian Research Centre in Dunedin brings together her passions, her professional skills and her past.

In her new job she expects to continue work towards forming a cohesive research centre from the archive and library. There will also be a focus on publicising the centre and "moving into the digital space" to make many of the centre's resources available online.

Jane is returning to her old university town, where she met her husband, Mark Stirling. The family was heading south from the Hutt Valley with Mark's appointment as Professor in the Chair of Earthquake Hazard at Otago University, and have a house in Sawyer's Bay.

So Jane was thrilled to see the advertisement for the director role on the New Zealand librarians' jobs website.

"Dunedin is such a cool place," she says. As students, she and Mark used to go round the city on his motorbike with her dog Phoebe between them. She is keen to take their two sons, Lewis, 15, and Toby, 11, to central Otago where she and Mark went on many trips while he did the geological fieldwork for his Master's degree there.

Jane grew up in Napier and attended St Paul's. Later her mother, Ailsa Thomsen, was an elder at St Columba's, Havelock North. Ailsa's great grandfather was Alexander Yule who took part in the first service, on Petone Beach, after arriving in the Bengal Merchant in February 1840.

"Church archives are one of the major historical primary research areas. This is the other part that interested me about the role."

She did a Bachelor of Anthropology at Otago University and says she "fell into" being a professional librarian when the careers advisor suggested she door knock in government departments and see if she could find a job. A role in a government library would give Jane



Jane Thomsen, new director of PRC.

the year of experience required to enter the post-graduate diploma course in librarianship.

She landed a job in the library of the Ministry of Health. "I thought I'd do it till I worked out what I should be doing, but I really enjoyed it."

Later, when she was made redundant, the ministry paid for her to go to Victoria University and do the Diploma in Librarianship. She then worked at the Energy Efficiency Authority library within the Ministry of Commerce.

Then, when husband Mark went to do his PhD in Reno, Nevada, she found a job as manager of a hospital library in Carson City. "It was for medical and nursing staff, but we did get members of the public in the door as well."

After returning home she worked for the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology before her eldest son was born.

"Then I saw my dream job – manager of the library and learning centre at the Hutt Valley District Health Board.

"After eight years, and another baby, I felt it was time for a change. I had become very interested in health literacy – writing so that patients and doctors can communicate well. I found a 20-hour a week job at Learning Media,

publishers of school journals, which also did information for the Ministry of Health website and pamphlets for doctors' offices.

"I took the job as librarian and records manager, but I was able to do health literacy work as well. I became a health literacy consultant, doing small contracts.

"At that point, I started a Masters degree in librarianship, focusing on health literacy and information. I did a research paper on how GPs communicate information their patients."

When Learning Media ended in 2013, Jane got a job as subject librarian for education at Victoria University. This included a teaching role. "We were responsible for teaching everyone – students, post-graduate students and faculty members – to use online systems and databases. We were also responsible for collection development, considering what should be purchased and whether the collections were fit for purpose."

When she started looking for a new job as the family got ready for moving to Dunedin, "I was looking at anything. I was very excited when I saw something there – a really interesting position that provides a perfect way back into a city I loved in the past."

Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)

FELLOWSHIP FOR ASIAN MINISTERS



A visit to Assembly Office was part of the programme for a group of the Church's Asian ministers as part of their Wellington fellowship meeting.

According to the 2013 Census, Asian people make up around 12 percent of New Zealand's population, and the question of how is the Church adapting to this demographic shift was just one of the topics discussed at a meeting of Asian ministers in Auckland in early December.

Dr Je Cheol Cook, pastor of Greyfriars Eden Epsom Presbyterian Church, was one of 12 Asian ministers who attended the Asian Ministers Fellowship meeting, which was held at St Columba Church in Botany Downs.

"It was the first time this year we've really come together, so it was a great opportunity to get to know one another," says Je Cheol.

It was also a chance for the predominantly Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese ministers who attended to talk about the work they've done in their individual churches and how they can better work collaboratively.

Je Cheol says that a number of ministers, including himself, work in cross-cultural ministries and one of the pressing issues was how to manage the minister/Asian congregation ratio.

"Many Asians have migrated to New Zealand in the last few years, but there are only a few Asian ministers to help them get settled. Our challenge is how we can best work across these congregations to help new people to settle in New Zealand."

Also on the agenda was how Asian ministers could help their congregations integrate with a range of different cultures.

"There has been a demographic shift in New Zealand where ministers are working with multi-ethnic, multi-cultural parishioners to deliver the gospel. We need to be able to work with Maori, Pacific Islanders and other ethnic groups in the Church and help our Asian worshippers to do the same."

Another significant topic discussed at the December meeting was the Presbyterian Church's ageing demographic.

"Generally, European congregations are getting older, but Asian and Pacific Island congregations are getting younger. So this presents its own challenges as to how ministers manage that paradigm shift."

One way Je Cheol is doing this is by running East Meets West seminars at Greyfriars, which bring together parishioners of all ethnicities to expose them to different cultures.

"These seminars help us to understand the difference between Western and Eastern cultures. At the Asian Ministers Fellowship meeting, we discussed the need to hold more of these seminars."

But the meeting wasn't all high-level discussion; a highlight was the presentation by the Right Rev Andrew Norton, who spoke about his recent visit to Taiwan and South Korea.

Two months prior to the Auckland meeting, there was a similar gathering of Asian ministers, but this time in Wellington.

On 12 October 2015, more than 10 Asian ministers convened at the Church's Wellington national office to meet staff and to get an overview of what they do, says the Rev David Sang Joon Kim.

"This was an invitation initiated by Assembly Office to introduce the staff in the different sectors and their work and vision to the Asian ministers, and also for them to meet us," says David Sang Joon.

"We were welcomed by Assembly Executive Secretary, Rev Wayne Matheson and he opened the meeting by giving us an overview of the Church, including its history, mission and values, as well as the challenges faced by the Church today in witnessing Christ to the society."

As it was the first time in Wellington for many of the Asian ministers, there was also some time for sightseeing before they headed to the airport.

"The day at national office was really successful and we got a lot out of it," says David Sang Joon. "It was good to actually put names to faces, because we often deal with national office staff by phone or email. So actually meeting them helped to create a sense of community."

**Note: Asian Ministries Coordinator Rev Kyoung Gyun Han was overseas and unavailable for comment for this story.*

Sharon Stephenson Spanz

A new side of Fiji

Two groups of young Aucklanders experienced a side of life very far from the typical tourist experience when they took mission trips to Fiji recently.

The idea of taking a youth team from Glendowie Presbyterian Church to an impoverished part of Fiji came about after the church's youth group, who all attend the local decile 10 college, started visiting a decile one primary school in the neighbouring suburb of Glen Innes. The team offers educational support to the pupils, particularly with remedial maths and English.

In July last year, the team of 11 young people and six adults headed to Lautoka, where they visited four primary schools, two of which included pupils with special needs. The young people went to classrooms to help with lessons, and played games with the children at break time. They also took over lots of stationery and school supplies.

The team really immersed themselves in the culture — wearing sulus (a type of skirt worn by men and women), learning basic Fijian words and becoming friends with the locals.

“At each school, we got up in front of the assembly, introduced ourselves, and shared some Kiwiana, like a talk on New Zealand food or sport,” says the Rev Douglas Bradley. “We then did a Maori song, a Christian song, and a skit on the Good Samaritan, and finally two of our youth would give testimony on how they came to know Christ.”

“There were lots of new experiences for the young people to reflect on,” adds Douglas. “They experienced a side of Fiji that most visitors don't. Every night we did Bible study and reflected on what we had done that day.”

“It was a real eye-opening experience,” says Ella Ballentyne, one of the young people who took part. “We have so much, and so many people there have so little. They don't even have any of the basic things that we take for granted, but they're so happy with what they do have.”

After the success of the trip, Glendowie Presbyterian plans to send a youth team



Fiji School Mission: The St Kentigern's team pictured in front of the medical centre in Nawaka, which they helped complete during their visit.

back to Lautoka every other year, and to fundraise for further supplies to gift to the schools over there.

Meanwhile, a group of year eight students from Saint Kentigern Boys' and Girls' Schools, also decile 10, took a trip to Nawaka village near Nadi.

“It was a new thing for us,” says the Rev Reuben Hardie, chaplain at Saint Kentigern. “One teacher's father lives in Fiji and has contacts in Nawaka. The village is right in the flood path, so it gets devastated by floods on a regular basis. It's very third world.”

“We chose Fiji because of its familiarity,” says Reuben. “New Zealanders often holiday there, but they only see one side of it. It's one of the countries in the Pacific where some communities still experience extreme poverty and a significant lack of resources.”

The group shipped a container of sports equipment, furniture, school resources and other items to help the schools. They worked alongside pupils to assist them with computer skills and English, and played sports with them. “The energy and care with which our students engaged with the children was outstanding,” says Reuben.

The team helped to finish the medical centre in Nawaka while they there.

“The students and their parents worked tirelessly to complete the centre. The parents proved to be incredibly resourceful — paints and tools were purchased, curtains were sown, shelves were constructed and a door was made from scratch. We provided the furniture too. It was such a great achievement to get it finished and opened to the public.

The group was invited to a church service in the village, where they heard about the difference the local people believed the medical centre would make for their community. “We were told that the final result was better than they ever could have imagined,” says Reuben.

After coming back from Fiji, they received an update about the medical centre: after initially offering services mainly for mums and babies, it had been opened to everyone and two doctors had been posted there, providing full check ups for all. The district medical officer reported that it was the best rural medical centre in the area.

“The rewards of serving this Fijian community and making a positive difference to their lives were very real and felt deeply by all members of our team,” concludes Reuben.

Kate Davidson Spanz



Last year, a group of young people from around New Zealand took a trip to North India, where they learned about the history of Presbyterian mission and immersed themselves in Indian culture.

Going Global is a project between Global Mission and Presbyterian Youth Ministry, which aims to introduce young people to churches overseas and provide opportunities for them to participate in mission. In previous years, groups have visited Myanmar and Vanuatu. This trip explored our Church's mission history in India, and the 11 participants learned about the changing mission context and visited projects that the Church is currently supporting.

"We have a long mission history with the Church of North India (CNI) — more than 100 years — so it was appropriate to take a team there," says Global Mission Coordinator Rev Phil King. "New Zealanders have been serving in the medical, educational and pastoral fields, and have made significant contributions. Their legacy is still very much alive. We don't want the story to die; we want to encourage, inspire and motivate a new generation."

The first stop was Delhi, where the group interacted and worshipped with the CNI Synod. They were shown around by the Delhi Brotherhood Society, a non-government organisation that bases its mission on Christian principles. The team visited social programmes that the Brotherhood runs such as a boys' hostel, a technical training institute, and a school for children of commercial sex workers. "The Delhi Brotherhood have so many projects," says Kylie Windle of Somervell Presbyterian Church in Remuera, who was a senior member of the team. "They work with young people, old people, the homeless, children, and they offer vocational training. The breadth of the support they're offering, and not just to Christians, blew me away."

"It was enlightening and challenging," adds Brian Rowley, one of the co-leaders on the trip. "We were confronted by the reality of how different life is in India. We saw it through the young people's eyes, which was very interesting."

Mana Leasi, who attends Porirua Pacific Island Presbyterian Church, was one of those young people. "I applied to go on the trip after Phil came to our church to talk about the mission," she says. "It really grabbed my attention, and wasn't something I had known much about before."

For Mana, the high point was being part of the lives of the people and building connections. "We met with the locals and were a part of everyday life for them for that two and a half weeks," she says. "It was great visiting the nursing school at Jagadhri, seeing the staff and children at St Thomas's School and visiting the leper colony. We got to take part in people's lives, see the challenges they live with and how they overcome them. I would definitely love to go again, but I came home feeling much more appreciative of what we have here in New Zealand."

Mana says she was expecting to face a few challenges on the trip. "I knew there would be a culture shock, especially because of the busyness of life there, and the realities of the caste system. There was all that and more. It was a real eye-opener. Facing the poverty was one of the hardest things — seeing how real and extreme it is."



"The group saw Indian culture in its rawest form," says Phil. "We were hosted by people locally, we saw people in slums, a leper colony... it was very confronting, but also very inspiring and humbling to see how they cope in a culture that shuns them and keeps them separate. The team learned about Indian religion and culture, and how the caste system is still very prevalent. We had a really good session about that and its impact on society."

The team was encouraged to think about how they could give back in some way. "It doesn't have to be in India," says Phil. "It's about the Kingdom of God and spreading the good news to people wherever you are in the world. We have great wealth at our fingertips and should give back. It was a spiritual journey for each member of the team, and part of a discipleship process. It really touched their hearts."

A training day in Auckland helped the team prepare for the trip. The young people were briefed on cross-cultural relationships and were given other useful information, says Phil. "The team came together really well. Everyone shared and respected the others, which was a key reason for the success of the mission."

There were several team members with medical backgrounds, and the visits to Indian hospitals supported by the Church were of particular interest to them. "We visited the Christian Medical College and Hospital at Ludhiana," recalls Brian. "Our medical team members got to see how different things were. It was a good facility and well equipped, though other places we saw had 50 patients to a room and were far more basic. One striking thing was how holistic the care was. They treat the whole person,



The Going Global team were welcomed by students from the School of Nursing at Jagadhri Christian Hospital.

physical and spiritual, and that's a very different approach from the New Zealand one."

They also had the opportunity to talk and pray with patients and their families. "We were interacting with mostly non-Christian people, but they were very open to being prayed for," says Brian.

The whole team was amazed by the warmth of the hospitality they received wherever they went. "We were put on a pedestal and treated like royalty," says Kylie. "Everywhere we went we were given gifts and performed for! One thing that struck me was how happy a lot of the people we met seemed, when they have so little. They're so spiritually welcoming and accepting of Christianity."

A particular high point for Kylie was visiting the Avalon Girls' Hostel, where 15 of the girls are directly supported by Somervell Church. "I took pictures of all the girls and wrote down their names and ages to share with the church. If people can see who they are, it makes it a more direct relationship rather than just a financial one."

The group took a bus trip to the Himalaya foothills with the girls. "It was so exciting for them, and was real quality time," says Kylie. "The next day we saw them at school, which was lovely. It was an intense time as the girls were emotionally needy and we were pulled in lots of directions. They wanted to make an impression on us."

Brian took his group to the St Paul's Hostel School for boys. He had visited two years back, when the hostel was really struggling, and was delighted to see how it had improved and

become more home-like. "We got to know the boys there, which was meaningful for them and for us," he says. "We taught them frisbee, and really related to them despite the fact that they had quite limited English. They never get Western visitors, and they told us they'd never forget our visit. It really cut you to the heart to hear that."

Most of the boys are from small villages where there is no hope of education. The parents and the local church put some funding toward the school, and the CNI Synod also supports it. "It was fantastic how the boys cared for one another," says Brian. "Their ages ranged from five to 18, and the five-year-olds would sit on the older ones' knees. They gave each other huge support, and the leadership there was fantastic."

"To see the legacy of what the Church has established in North India was amazing," he adds. "People's lives have changed phenomenally through Christian mission, and not just through physical activities. It has impacted people's lives for the long term. The children and grandchildren of people who were down-and-out are now educated with decent jobs thanks to Christian mission and education. It's had a phenomenal impact across generations."

"Going Global India was a great success," concludes Phil. "It was a challenge to put together but was a great privilege to travel with the team, who were so open to learning and sharing, and respectful of the culture we went into. We learned a great deal, and the trip really developed our relationship with the CNI too."

Kate Davidson [Spanz](#)

Sharing gifts across the Pacific

In Oamaru change is happening fast. Large numbers of Tongans are finding a ready welcome in the churches and rugby clubs of the small South Island town.

In Tonga change is happening more slowly. Lesieli (pictured) in the village of Ha'atafu has a newly repaired water tank that will help her family get through the drought weather that forecasters say threatens Pacific nations like Tonga. Many more people will be able to collect rainwater thanks to local efforts and support from a New Zealand government grant, Christian World Service and the Waitaki Presbyterian Parish.

Home to the South Island's fastest growing Tongan community, Oamaru has an opportunity to build direct links with Tonga and strengthen local relationships according to Waitaki Presbyterian's minister the Rev Jill McDonald. In seeking a way forward, Jill and the parish have been working with local Tongans, the mayor of Oamaru, the Oamaru Rotary Club and others in the community to develop a practical shared project to provide real help in Tonga.

CWS's international programmes coordinator Trish Murray introduced Jill to long-term partner Ama Takiloa, a network of women's groups at the heart of many villages. The women meet regularly and help each other grow better gardens and earn more income.

After Cyclone Ian devastated much of the Ha'apai island group in January 2014, local Ama Takiloa groups encouraged their people to clean up the debris, salvage materials to cobble together shelter and replant. Visiting the villages a few months later, Trish was impressed by the home gardens she saw. Sadly much of this first crop has now been damaged by drought.

Preparing for inevitable disaster has been high on Ama Takiloa's agenda. Without a natural freshwater supply, self-sufficiency on Ha'apai is more important than ever.



In Tonga, rainwater harvesting systems are helping families like Lesieli's develop and maintain sustainable and reliable fresh water supplies.

Similarly on Tongatapu, Tonga's main island, tap water can be very unreliable. Building rainwater harvesting systems and training the women to maintain them is one of the best ways to equip them for the future. Ama Takiloa groups are developing plans to help their villages in case of emergency.

Last year Jill and husband Chris were "blown away" by the hospitality that they received when they visited Tonga.

"It was wonderful to be with people where God was talked about freely – where the sacred and the secular are woven together so naturally," she said in her report to the Waitaki congregation.

Sensing God's call, the congregation is getting behind a plan to build two rainwater harvesting tanks which will collect water from church roofs in each of three villages: Ahau, Ha'atafu and Kanukupolu on the main island of Tongatapu. They are waiting for the formal agreement from each village before Tongans and palagi in Oamaru begin fundraising. A small team from Oamaru plan to work with Ama Takiloa and locals to install the systems, laying the foundations for a longer term relationship.

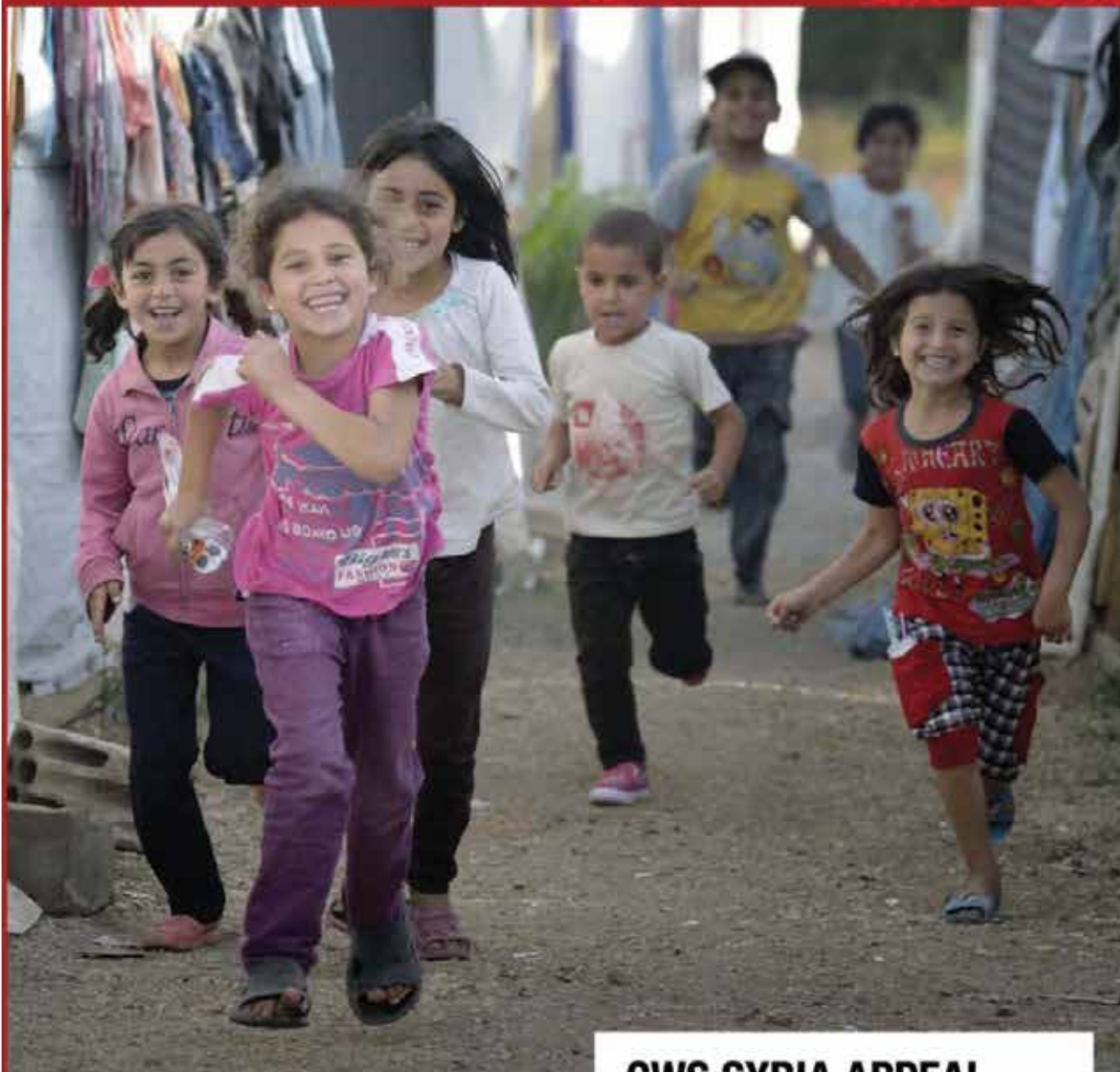
As the project was developing in Oamaru, concern about the potential damage from this year's El Nino weather pattern resulted in an opportunity to provide

drought mitigation. CWS successfully applied for government funding so that its long-term partner Ama Takiloa can install 15 water tanks in community halls and monitor and repair up to 250 household rainwater systems. Ama Takiloa will carry out workshops to help people prepare for drought and better conserve water. The \$90,000 government grant will speed up the existing CWS programme in Ha'apai and western Tongatapu including Ha'atafu, Lesieli's home.

Ama Takiloa is one just one of CWS's partners that work to make sure vulnerable communities have water. In 2014 St John's in the City and St Andrew's on the Terrace held a successful 24 hour musicathon to improve water supply in Palestine's West Bank. The Centre for Community Solidarity in southwest Uganda supports widows and caregivers of HIV and AIDS orphans to build rainwater tanks. CWS welcomes opportunities to link groups and congregations with partners like Ama Takiloa to meet community needs.

Water and sanitation for all is one of the new sustainable development goals agreed last year at the United Nations. While water may be a basic human right, 663 million people do not have access to safe and reliable drinking water and 2.4 billion lack adequate sanitation. World Water Day is on 22 March.

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PO Box 22652 Christchurch 8140



Creating a better life for generations to come

After taking care of your loved ones in your will, a legacy can make a positive impact on future generations of Kiwis. A legacy gift to Presbyterian Support will create stronger communities and fund social services that help make New Zealand the best place to raise children. You'll bring forward the day when the aged, disabled and other vulnerable groups maximise their independence. You'll create a better life for everyone.

What your gift will achieve

Legacy gifts of the past have already helped us achieve so much. Some examples include:

- Social services for at-risk young families in some of the most deprived areas of New Zealand
- Research into how to improve dementia care
- Nutritious food items and practical support for emergency foodbanks
- Mentoring programmes for young people.

Family Works walks alongside children and families to help bring positive and lasting changes in their lives. Our Enliven services enable people to thrive and stay healthy and engaged with their communities. We also offer hands-on support to enable the financially disadvantaged to move from debt to financial independence.

Please contact your local bequest manager to discuss leaving a gift in your will.

Presbyterian Support Northern
Suzanne Ward (09) 520 8628
suzanne.ward@psn.org.nz

Presbyterian Support East Coast
Sylvie Gibbins (06) 877 8193
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Presbyterian Support Central
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Presbyterian Support Upper South Island
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Presbyterian Support Otago
Richard Farquhar (03) 454 6620
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Presbyterian Support Southland
Noel Hassed (03) 211 8200
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Proudly a supporter of:

include a charity
Help the work live on.

"I feel like our family is saved - that we have a family now."
Helped through Family Works.



"I have been associated with Presbyterian Support as a supporter over many years, and have followed their work with increasing interest. I am particularly enthusiastic about the amazing work that they are doing out in the community at large, in so many ways."

Supporter who intends to leave a bequest to Presbyterian Support.

www.ps.org.nz



Presbyterian Support