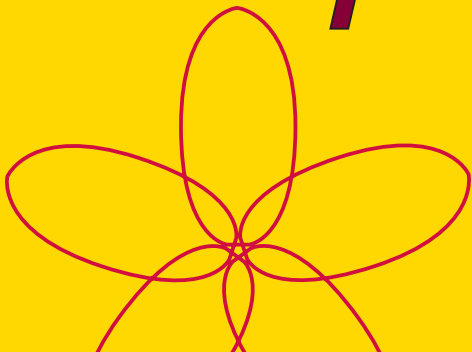




Family Raising Kin



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand



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PRAYER

Gracious and loving God

You created us in your image and call us your children.

From before we were born to the end of our days, you are there, with us, for us, calling us into being with you.

We seek your ways of forgiveness and reconciliation. We acknowledge that even among those with whom we share the closest of relationships, even within our families, we experience both great joy but also anxiety and worry and hurt.

Help us we pray as we strive to be good children, parents, grandparents; doing our best as members of big and small families, and playing our part in the household of your people. Uphold those, we ask, who feel isolated and alone in their work of caring for family members, those who seek forgiveness and those who long for the restoration of broken and damaged relationships.

Help us to build a society where those caring for children and the most vulnerable receive the support and encouragement they need.

In Jesus' name

AMEN

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Introduction

"Whoever does not provide for relatives, especially for family members, has denied the faith." 1 Timothy 5:8

Traditionally "the family" has been the main source of caring and support for people, especially the old, young and dependent. But nowadays the extended (or three-generation) family is much less likely to live together due to increases in divorce, de facto partnerships, re-partnering, blended families and sole-parenthood.

This has led to calls for a kind of reactivation of extended family and kinship networks, based on Biblical teaching, and for Biblical values of family support to be brought into public policy¹.

As New Zealand becomes increasingly multicultural, ideas about what constitutes family continue to diversify. For example, for Māori, connections between whānau, hapu and iwi are of prime importance and the concept of whānaungatanga, or family connectedness, embraces a very wide concept of family.

For all New Zealanders, longer life expectancy means that a majority of families will experience three, and often four, living generations at some point. This means that more people will experience grandparenthood, and for longer periods. Most people will become grandparents for the first time in their 50s; by the age of 65 over two-thirds of people are grandparents². Māori tend to become grandparents earlier, before the age of 45.

Why are grandparents and other family members being called on to raise their kin's children? Because they are often seen as being the next best thing to parents.

Many grandparents say that the best thing about grandparenting is that you can love and enjoy grandchildren and then send them back home. But what if sending back is not an option? This study booklet explores the situation of grandparents and other family members who have been called on to be full-time carers for related children and teens (kin). It asks why an increasing number are being asked to care for kin, what the impact of "repeat parenting" is, and how we can best support those in our congregations and community raising kin in what are often difficult circumstances emotionally and financially.*

**The term "raising" is used throughout this study to indicate grandparents and kinship carers taking on a full-time parental/custodial role. The terms "grandparents" and "kin carers" are used interchangeably.*

FAMILY RAISING KIN: A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

By the Right Rev Peter Cheyne

Grandparents choosing, or often obligated, to raise their grandchildren is a growing phenomenon in our society and one that is largely invisible. It is important that we pause to consider the consequences – the pressures and sacrifices – for these older people who were undoubtedly looking forward to some freedom from the very demanding responsibilities of parenting. While these grandparents might be willing to sacrifice for the sake of their grandchildren, many are suffering in silence because the Church is simply unaware that there is an issue.

As with the Biblical “widows and orphans” there is a fundamental need for the Church community to support and care for those who are vulnerable, who do carry a heavy load and can go unnoticed. The Bible gives specific commands to care for those in genuine need (for example, the “pastoral care” instructions in 1 Timothy 5:1-16, which also set boundaries and, intriguingly, assume that grandchildren should care for their grandparents while we are seeing the opposite need.) We also see the “one another” commands become very relevant – bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), consider the interests of others (Philippians 2:4), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), build one another up (Romans 15:2). We are also to share with one another (Hebrews 13:16) and to offer hospitality (1 Peter 4:9). Of course, most fundamentally, we are to love one another (John 13:34).

With grandparents in mind, each of these commands could suggest practical actions, actions that could form a valuable outcome from this study; for example, some churches might set up support ministries focused on helping these gallant grandparents.

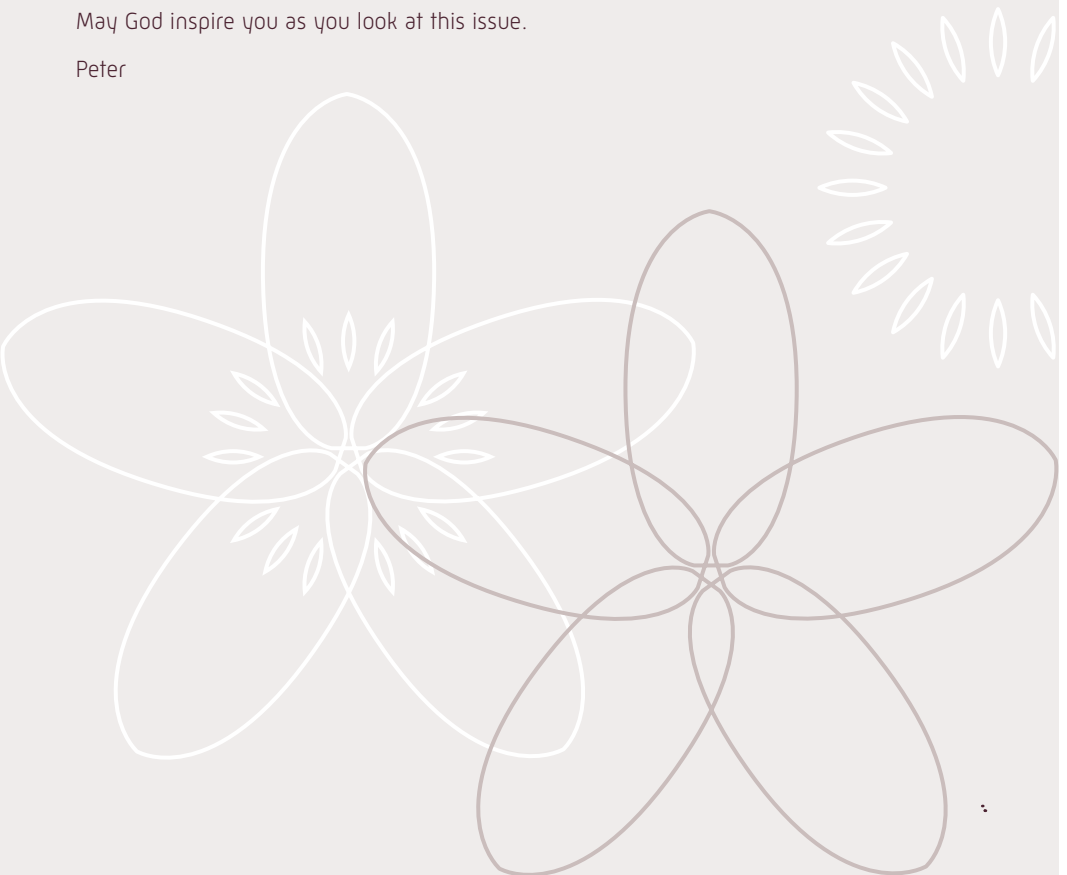
Of course, we must also ask why extended family are being called on to care for their kin and why this is increasing. Why are some parents not willing or able to care for their children? Situations will vary from what we might consider contemptible neglect through to very genuine and unavoidable circumstances. At the same time, if there are issues we as a society need to address, then we should do so. This might include questioning our use of alcohol and other drugs. There might be room for churches to offer more parenting courses, or for people to be willing to get alongside and mentor struggling parents so that they are better equipped to care for their children.

Addressing these issues requires an understanding of Biblical principles. If we are going to break out of the cycle of societal decay, we need that wisdom that “comes from heaven” (James 3:12-18), and that God promises to give generously to those who know they need it (James 1:5).

No one could suggest that the answers are easy. The burden placed on some grandparents is often a symptom that things are tragically wrong in our society. Nevertheless, as Bill Hybels says, “the church is the hope of the world.” We do have a message that can make a difference, and a God who can make a difference. Let’s be conscious of the positive difference we can make as God’s people.

May God inspire you as you look at this issue.

Peter





01

STUDY ONE: Who is caring for kin and why?

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Who is caring for kin and why?

IS KINSHIP CARE INCREASING?

Grandparents raising grandchildren and family members caring full-time for related children are not new phenomena. This kind of caring for kin has been going on for centuries, often as a result of the death of a parent or other emergencies. In some cultures, it is normal practice. Traditionally, part of the role of Māori whānau or extended families has been an informal raising of children by grandparents or other kin, called whāngai.

The New Zealand Families Commission 2009 "Changing Roles of Grandparents" survey of grandparents found the number of grandparents raising grandchildren is increasing. Seven percent, 47,000 grandparents, lived with one or more of their grandchildren, and Pacific and Māori respondents were much more likely to be living with their grandchildren (42 percent and 25 percent respectively). It is important, however, not to assume that co-residence means that grandparents are taking over parental care.

The United States has seen a growth in kinship care and multigenerational households. Canada and Australia have also seen an increase in children living with grandparents with no parent in the home³.

Because children being raised by kin often do not feature in formal statistics, the exact number of children involved is not known. New Zealand researcher Jill Worrall estimates that in New Zealand over 10,000 children are in kin/whānau care, many parented by their grandparents⁴. The Families Commission 2009 survey estimated that 12,000 grandparents were raising grandchildren, and Māori and Pacific respondents were five to six times more likely to be in this situation. In 2007, Work & Income released figures showing that in excess of 15,000 children were receiving the Unsupported Child Benefit.

A majority of kin carers (60 percent) are raising one child, but numbers range up to six children, with Māori carers more likely to be caring for more than one child.

Most children come into kinship care in their pre-school years, when their parents are in the 20-30 years age group. Almost a quarter of children had been with their grandparents/kin carers from birth.

Orphans in the New Testament

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world..."
 [James 1:27]

The word *orphan* in James 1:27 is the Greek word *orfanouv* or *orphanos*. *Orphanos* is the old word for bereft of father or mother or both. The Greek word for orphan can also be used to refer to children who are *abandoned, left, deprived, and destitute*. The only other place in which the Greek word for *orphan* is used in the New Testament is John 14:18, Jesus says that he will not leave his disciples as *orphans*.

- www.scripturessay.com/article.php?cat=&id=185

Who are the kinship carers?

Becoming a custodial grandparent and kin carer can happen at any age. In local studies more than 80 percent of kin carers are over 50 years of age. Because the age for child bearing is rising, there will be an increase in the number of grandparent caregivers in the older age groups. Some kin carers are step-grandparents, adoptive grandparents, or aunts, uncles and older brothers and sisters. But it is mostly to grandparents that families turn when care is needed, because grandparents are often retired and have more time, have a relationship with the children and have raised children before.

New Zealand child protection law now prescribes that when children are unable to be safely cared for by their biological parents, the extended family/whānau is the first resource sought for care. This role more often than not falls to grandparents because other kin, such as uncles and aunts, often have several children of their own and mortgages. Grandparents are also often the first to realise that their grandchildren are at risk and take the children without reference to any government agency.

New Zealand surveys* show that 60 percent of New Zealand kinship carers are married or partnered. Of those raising children single-handedly, most are divorced or separated, and the vast majority are women. Some have separated since taking custody of the children. This is also noted in international studies, which show that the stress of raising traumatised children can result in one partner leaving.

* "New Zealand surveys/research" referred to throughout this booklet refer to surveys conducted by UMR for the Families Commission and by Jill Worrall for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust from 2004 - 2009. See back page notes for details.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust (GRG)

The number of grandparents and other family members who are assuming full responsibility for raising their kin continues to increase in New Zealand. In response the New Zealand Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust was established 10 years ago to assist grandparents who had taken full custody or guardianship of their grandchildren and were struggling, with little or no help available.

The membership of the Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Trust at last count is almost 4000. The Trust has been a lifeline not only to grandparents but also to other extended family members such as aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers and cousins who have taken responsibility for kin children. There are 45 support groups around New Zealand and two field workers. The Trust has done much to influence Government policy on how kin carers are treated and undertook two major pieces of research (Jill Worrall 2005, 2009). The stories the grandparents and other extended family members shared during this research show that, in spite of many hurdles, grandchildren, nieces and nephews begin to heal when they receive stability, love and protection.

Reasons for kinship care

Often there are several contributing factors that lead to children coming into kinship care, the main being that the biological parents either cannot or will not offer satisfactory care. New Zealand surveys show neglect is the leading reason, followed by drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, mental illness and domestic violence or a combination of these. Additional causes are imprisonment, physical illness, abandonment (frequently at birth), intellectual disability, inability to cope, rape of the mother, divorce, poverty, father unwilling to work, prostitution, teenage pregnancy, new step-parents, death of a parent and gang association. Where the main carer is Māori, alcohol addiction and domestic violence are more common reasons; for European/Pākehā, mental illness and abandonment. Adolescent parenthood often results in extended family living together and kinship caring.

CASE STUDY: Salesi and Mekala* are in their 60s and attend a Pacific Island Presbyterian Church. They have three adult children and have been raising their grandchildren for the past 14 years.

Both Salesi and Mekala were raised in Samoa by their grandparents. Salesi's grandmother was "both mother and father to me because my birth mother lived and worked in New Zealand".

It was their adult children's relationship issues which led to Salesi and Mekala being called on to help raise their grandchildren. "Our children's relationships are often not smooth and everything gets turned upside down". Mekala says that as a mother, "I know when things are wrong; I stepped in and took the grandchildren before anything gets taken out on them".

Because Mekala works, Salesi is the grandchildren's day carer, "but if they need 'mother' then I take time off because the grandchildren are the most important thing".

Salesi and Mekala have been carers to their grandchildren since birth. "When our daughter was going to put our grandchild into childcare shortly after birth, I stepped in and said she should not put work and money before the baby, mother and baby need to bond. I said I would look after the baby until my grandchild was ready to go to school."

Raising children a second time requires a large time commitment, Salesi says, "because you are not just looking after them physically; there is the social and spiritual side. In a way this is a second chance, because I regret not having had time with my children when I was working all the time. I was heavy handed with my children; today I hate to see anyone treat children that way".

Salesi and Mekala say their children might not realise how fortunate they are to have them help raise their grandchildren. "When we were raising our children, we did not have our families to help; they were back in Samoa, and it was hard. Salesi worked two jobs, I stayed home and took care of the children and did night shift work. We do not want our children to experience that; we help them like family should. We want them by example to be there for their own grandchildren."

Grandparents raising grandchildren are common in her church, Mekala says. "The grandparents say it is tiring and I say, 'remember that your grandchildren will treasure this time they had with you when you are gone. You are making good memories'."

** Identifying details and names have been changed.*

Informal and formal kinship care

Many kinship carers initially take the child/ren through an informal agreement with the parents without any legal basis or intervention from government agency Child Youth and Family (CYF). Sometimes care is expected to be short term but becomes permanent.

In the latest New Zealand research, almost a quarter of kinship carers had no legal custody and/or guardianship status even though they had been caring for children for four years or more. These children have not come to the attention of child protective services as all matters are handled within the family/whānau. Some carers prefer

informal agreements, fearing that if they seek legal custody or report their concerns to CYF, the parents may contest it and the children's stability could be endangered. Other reasons that kinship carers do not seek to make their relationship with kin children formal include not being able to afford the legal fees and fear that formal action will damage already fragile relationships with the children's parents.

CASE STUDY: Rev Wayne Te Kaawa, Moderator Designate, Te Aka Puaho: The whāngai system

The whāngai system was instituted in Māori society by the well known ancestor Maui, who was the original whāngai in Māori society. Whāngai means to feed. In the Maui story he was brought up by his grand uncle Tamanui ki te ra who was also related to the mother of Maui, Tārangā. As a whāngai child Maui grew up knowing both his foster family and birth family, until one day he chose which family he would belong to; in this case he chose his birth family.

The genius of this system is that it is the child who chooses who they belong to, not the parents. In my case, the whāngai system was used extensively within the extended family. As a whāngai, I grew up knowing both families, often holidaying with my birth family, but made my decision to belong to my whāngai family when I was 11 years old.

In a sense the whāngai system becomes a safety net for many children and allows children to grow up knowing the full extent of their family ties. When I look back at my own upbringing, I would say that I had about 20 mothers and 20 fathers, plus a whole host of grandparents. It made me feel safe and secure knowing that I had so many people around me.

Throughout my childhood, at various times I had between 20-30 brothers and sisters all from within the extended family. Using this system allowed the bonds between extended family members to strengthen and grow. If a father died, then the other men in the extended family would become a father to the orphaned; and if a mother died, the other women of the family would become their mother. If a child died, then we all became brothers and sisters.

In traditional Māori society, the grandparents were charged with bringing up their grandchildren to allow the parents to gain employment. Many Māori today often tell wonderful stories of being brought up by their grandparents.

It can at times go wrong when it is not fully known by all participants why this system is incorporated.

It takes an entire community to bring up one child; and in the Church, it takes an entire community of faith to bring up one child in the faith.

Kin carers as legal guardians

Biological parents have the status of guardians and this can be extended to grandparents or other relatives under a shared custody order. The court may appoint a relative as a sole guardian, suspending the rights of the parents.

Kinship carers are recommended to use the legal system to ensure that the children in their care are secure and that they themselves have the legal standing to make important decisions, for example, about the children's education and medical care⁵. Without a legal arrangement, parents, even if drugged or intoxicated, can take children away at any time. Formal custodial status may also be needed for carers to receive financial help.

Formal arrangements for care are now mainly under the Care of Children Act 2004. This promotes shared responsibilities for parenting and has a strong focus on the rights of children. It gives the court a duty to seek early resolution of disputes and increased powers to dismiss vexatious guardianship applications that are not in the interests of the child. The Act also makes counselling available to help dispute resolution.

The old concept of "custody", which implied the possession of a child, has been replaced by "day to day care". "Access" has been replaced by "contact" (of all types). Parenting Orders specify the details of day to day care and contact with the child. This includes supervised contact in approved "Access Centres", such as those run by Barnardos. "Guardianship" gives a person all the duties, rights, responsibilities and powers that a parent has in bringing up a child (up to the age of 18). Under the Care of Children Act, parental responsibilities rather than rights are emphasised.

Alternatively there is the Children Young Persons (CYF) and their Families Act 1989; under this children are declared to be "in need of care and protection" before orders for care are made. Guardianship is usually shared between CYF and the parents. If the child is under the guardianship of CYF, then kinship carers can usually qualify for the Foster Care Allowance, which is more than the Unsupported Child Benefit.

Use of the Adoption Act 1955 is very rare. Adoption cuts legal ties with birth parents and is not easily obtained without the consent of children's parents.

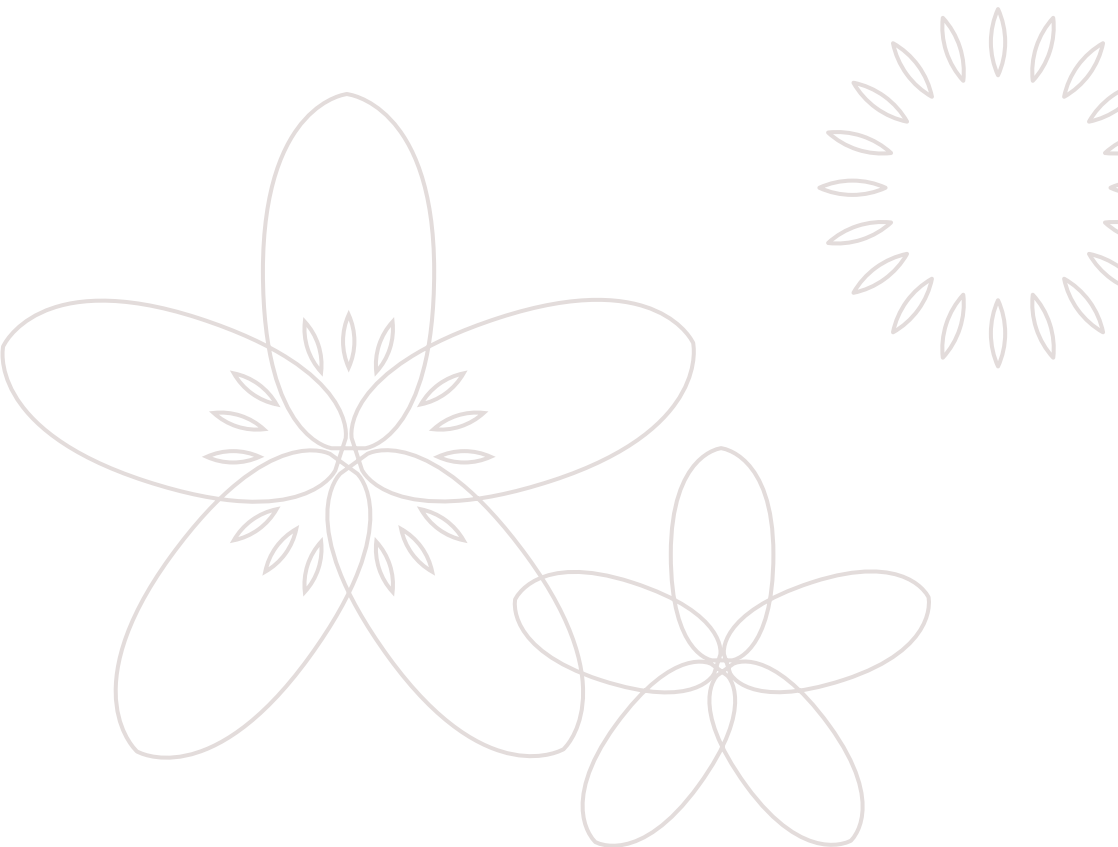
There has been a move to greater permanency in legal arrangements for kinship carers, while balancing contact with biological parents against the wishes and safety of the children. Kinship carers describe having to manage complicated and stressful access arrangements.

Challenges to the legal status of kinship carers are common and kinship carers can lose custody of the children. Many kinship carers incur significant legal costs in seeking custody, ranging up to \$260,000, but commonly \$1000-\$5000. Some may be eligible for legal aid as a repayable loan. If this is not repaid at the conclusion of the case, the Legal Services Agency can register a charge against property, particularly a home.

Talking points

What is your own family's experience of extended family living together and inter-generational caring? Have you observed in your family changes in the role of grandparents?

What Biblical values should the Government bring into social policies to strengthen extended families?





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02

STUDY TWO:

What are the impacts of kinship care?

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IMPACTS FOR CHILDREN

"We have around us many people whose lives tell us what faith means. So let us run the race that is before us and never give up" Hebrews 12:1

Kin caregivers are frequently called upon to care for children during a crisis or after children have been subjected to neglect, abuse or unsatisfactory living conditions. It is not surprising that many children experience physical and psychological problems, and learning difficulties.

Over half the kinship carers in the New Zealand surveys reported that the children suffered from physical illness or disability. Grandparents whose grandchildren were affected by foetal alcohol, "shaken baby syndrome" or parents' drug taking experience additional grief from knowing that the damage was caused by their own adult children.

Psychological or behavioural problems are almost as common as physical problems, with many children experiencing both. Some children have Conduct Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, hyperactivity, autism and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and others exhibit severe aggressive and destructive behaviour, self-harm, eating and sleeping disorders, chronic bed wetting, speech problems, panic attacks, inappropriate sexual behaviour, depression and anxiety. To help heal these problems, children need professional intervention and support and, above all, understanding, patience and unconditional love.

Children in kinship care often experience greater stability than they would have with their natural parents. They are less likely to experience changes of school. The majority of kinship carers in the New Zealand studies considered their children's educational progress to be excellent or good.

In the newsletters of the GRG Trust, many grandparents and kinship carers report on children and young people becoming independent; gaining confidence, self control and self esteem; socialising with others and doing well at sports and school.

Impacts for kinship carers

Most kinship carers have raised their own children and are nearing or have reached retirement. They find that their energy levels are lower (playing outdoors with children is not so easy when you are in your 70s or 80s!) and the likelihood of physical illness or

injury is greater. Earning capacity may be decreased. Housing has often been downsized and they have difficulty dealing with the gaps between the social expectations and pressures on today's youth (sexuality, dating, drugs and dress codes) compared to when they were raising their own children.

Health

Grandparents and kinship carers are not only taking on full parental roles, but often doing so in difficult and stressful situations. It is not surprising that there are significant impacts on their health, and many report multiple, serious and debilitating conditions. In the GRG Trust 2009 survey, respondents were asked about their health over the previous four years. Over 60 percent said that their health and that of their partner had deteriorated.

Some carers report physical injury and verbal abuse from the children or from the parents. Many kinship carers have multiple caring roles, not only for children but also for partners (most frequently ageing husbands) with deteriorating health.

CASE STUDY: Betty and her husband are in their 70s and 80s and are full time carers for two grand-nephews

Eight years ago Betty and her husband were woken from their sleep by a call from CYF asking if they would take her two grand-nephews into their home for protection. The boys, aged three and five, had been sexually abused by their mother's partner.

"We took them in and it was horrific. There was a family group meeting between us all and my niece wanted foster care instead of us. She threatened us."

Betty was then in her 60s and her husband in his 70s. "At night the little boys wouldn't sleep in their beds, they would hide in the kitchen cupboard or under the sofa holding onto each other."

Betty says their social network was their Presbyterian church "but our church friends didn't want to visit us once we had the little ones or us to visit with them. We felt abandoned".

With their health declining, Betty says the most stressful times have been when she and her husband, now in his 80s, have had to go to hospital for operations with no family or friends to help. "I have had heart surgery, a hip replaced; my husband had cancer and two hips replaced. We spent our savings and our pension on child care. Our health has deteriorated faster because of how hard this has been."

Fighting for a weekly allowance was a long process, Betty says. "CYF kept saying they didn't know how long we would have the children so they wouldn't help us. Now we have it and it doesn't cover much. Our pension has been stretched for living costs plus new clothes, gymnastics, rowing, soccer, rugby, school trips and orthodontist. They have growth spurts and need new shoes, uniforms and clothes every few months."

Betty says her adult children have their own families and they, like her older friends, say that to cut costs they should not let the children take part in sports. "But the boys are used to being around older people; they have no confidence with younger people so they need sport to connect socially. They already miss out on much because of our age".

Her family is jealous of the attention she gives the boys, says Betty. "They accuse us of spoiling them and not spending money on our grandchildren. They say the boys have stolen their inheritance. But the boys are like sons; without us they would be in care and unloved."

Social and Cultural Activities

The social activities of kinship carers are often severely limited. In recent surveys just over half of respondents said they had no social activities. Many said their only social life was the school or sporting activities of the children. Many activities that they used to enjoy, such as bowls, bridge, golf, croquet and Rotary, are now out of the question.

Māori grandparents raising their mokopuna may have additional commitments on their time to whānau, hapu and iwi, in their roles as kaumatua and kuia.

Paid work

Nearly 60 percent of respondents in the New Zealand surveys are in either full or part time employment. In partner situations, 77 percent have at least one partner working. Others had stopped work, reduced their hours and taken early retirement in order to provide full time kin care. When a carer leaves work, there may be difficulty in regaining employment at their later stage of life. Other carers have continued to work after their expected retirement age because superannuation does not meet the financial needs of raising a family, especially with childcare costs.

Trying to balance the needs of children and the demands of a job is difficult for all working parents but especially so for older solo kin carers when the children have histories of neglect and abuse. Employment – where, when and how long to work – has to fit in with the needs and schedules of the children.

Finances

Consistent with international findings, New Zealand kinship carers often face serious financial problems. Caring for any child is expensive, but when he/she has on-going physical, emotional and educational needs, the cost can be unmanageable. The most common reason for financial stress is the necessity to give up work, followed by legal fees. Numerous examples of hardship and of resourceful economising can be found in the newsletters of the GRG Trust, including the use of food banks, op-shops and toy libraries. They also document ongoing efforts to obtain fair financial support from WINZ.

Many kinship carers receive no financial help to meet the children's needs and have to use their own resources, including: bank loans; reverse mortgages; family loans; money-lenders; selling property, overdrafts on credit cards; closing an insurance policy; redeeming insurance policies; WINZ loan and drawing on investments.

A high proportion of kinship carers are often retirees or beneficiaries – in the GRG Trust 2009 survey, 41 percent earned \$20,000 or less per annum.

Benefits

Orphans Benefit – supports children if their parents have died, cannot be found or have a long term illness.

Unsupported Child Benefit – supports children whose parents cannot due to family breakdown. How much is paid depends on how old the child is and any income they may get from their parents' estate, a family trust, investments, or regular insurance payments. The maximum weekly payment for each child is:

Child under 5	5-9 years	10-13 years	14 or over
\$137.64	\$159.72	\$176.26	\$192.70

Foster Care Allowance – if a kin carer is acting as a foster parent, because the child is in the custody of CYF, the carer is eligible for the Foster Care Allowance, plus other funds for related child costs.

In April 2009, the Orphans and Unsupported Child Benefit rates were increased to align with Foster Care Allowance weekly board rates. This is a significant improvement; however, it is still not equitable as foster parents can still claim more because they receive additional money for medical, clothing, education and counselling costs.

..... "I was told [by WINZ] that I had to go back to work full-time and his mother had to look after her son. She gave me three working days to prove that my daughter was unfit to care for her son. This was extremely stressful, especially given the fact that my daughter has supervised visits. Work and Income had a copy of the Court Order so there was no excuse or even apology. I have had the feeling that the Work and Income system would have been quite content for me to stay at work and leave grandson where he was to die. There is no doubt he would have. And yet they all beat their chests when

... a child dies and say 'where are the families?'; we are here struggling and often going without basic human needs to save an innocent. It is humbling to ask for food vouchers! ... A WINZ employee suggested that I wash hair in dish wash detergent to save dollars."

- Grandmother raising grandchild

CASE STUDY: The Rev Erana Manihera, minister, Te Aka Puaho

The Rev Erana Manihera is a minister with Te Aka Puaho, the Presbyterian Māori synod. Now in her 70s, Erana, also known as "Auntie Erana", has raised or helped to raise "so many children I have lost count; kids were just given to me to look after".

Erana says 40 and 50 years ago, "early in my marriage and when I had the energy and could afford it" she raised toddlers to teens, including her own children, her grandchildren, her nephews and nieces. "They were good times of plenty; they are all grown up now, moved away, all married and have their own lives, some still come back for a holiday or I go visit them. I see my niece and nephew a lot because I am mum and they like to come home."

Living in Ruatāhuna in the Ureweras means that while Erana would like to have her great grandson "who is getting into trouble" come and live with her, he is not interested because there are no shops and she doesn't have Sky TV and a new TV for the Playstation "and I would make him work, mow the lawn".

The days of children being content to play outside in the sun are gone, Erana says. "When I raised children, they were outside with other children. We lived in a village, everyone got to know everyone and the kids would go bush, fish, swim, play sports. They would go into town to Murupara, and they wouldn't get into trouble. Now children want to stay inside and stare at a screen and they are very choosy about their clothing and everything. They go into town and get into trouble. I don't know how a grandparent raising children today can keep up financially because everything is money; they want the latest and do not want to work for it. The old way, the Māori way, was children happy to have a roof, food and education."

Housing

Kinship carers, particularly grandparents, are likely to experience challenges in finding accommodation when they take on child-raising. More than half the respondents in the GRG Trust 2009 survey had experienced housing problems. As well as needing a larger house, or modifications to accommodate grandchildren with disabilities, some had to move to another district to ensure the family's safety or for educational reasons. Some moved into their children's locality to lessen disruption by keeping the children in their own community and school, moving the kin carer away from support such as friends and church family. Some have had to buy a smaller or cheaper house, rent, or re-mortgage to free up capital to support the children or pay legal costs.

Emotional impact

Jill Worrall, in her extensive research on kinship care and in her social work practice, has observed the full range of impacts on grandparents and other kin carers. She describes grief, sorrow and anger. "Grief arises out of disappointment that their children/grandchildren have gone to prison; the death of their own children; death of spouses; broken marriages; lives lost to drugs and alcohol and grief in respect of injuries children will not recover from." They may feel anger when they face challenges to custody, knowing that the money for legal fees could be better spent on the children.

Despite the stress, worry and anxiety, the tenacity of grandparents and other kin carers and their dedication to the children in their care is obvious. For some children, the care and the love they have received has given rise to extraordinary achievement against great odds.⁶

CASE STUDY: Verna, Presbyterian church member raising three great-grandchildren

Verna* is in her 80s, she is a great grandmother caring full time for three of her great grandchildren aged three, 13 and 14 years. She attends a Presbyterian church in Canterbury.

Verna did not know her granddaughter had had a baby "until she showed up at my door and asked me to babysit. She never came back. I've had the baby for close to two years. We don't hear from my granddaughter but people tell me she is into in some horrible things involving drugs".

For the past five years, Verna has also been raising her grandson's two daughters. "I would go visit and find the little girls alone, crying, not dressed, no food, doors wide open, strangers coming and going".

Verna says her great granddaughters were terrible bed wetters and they "still have their problems. They have had a bit of counselling and they are in a buddy programme. The only other help I can get is when they go on a holiday camp once a year."

Financially Verna says things have been hard and are getting harder. "Now that they are older they want more things like their friends have. Because we didn't go through CYF we don't get all the entitlements so I go without so the girls can have. Because I can't afford what they want they stole so I took them to the Police Youth Aid Officer for a talk and they said 'he can't do anything to us' but they wrote apology letters. They are at an age where everything is either, 'I love you Nan' or 'I hate you Nan'. Sometimes when I feel like I can't take anymore, I go sit in my room, then they slide a note under my door, 'Nan we love you heaps and heaps.'"

* Identifying details and names have been changed.

CASE STUDY: Rokahurihia Ngārimu–Cameron, artist, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, foster mother, Presbyterian church-goer

Rokahurihia Ngārimu–Cameron was born in Opōtiki in the 1940s and raised by her kuia (grandmother) in a earth floor whare (house) on a pā site at Hāwai in the rohe (territory) of Te Whānau-a-Āpānui. “It was hard. We washed in the creek, went to the toilet in a long drop. If my kuia Nanny Roka could not catch some fish, find watercress or get the farmer to give us some milk or meat, we went hungry.”

Roka says that for a long time she thought she had missed out “on a lot by not having a mum and dad, I was angry and I was ashamed to have a very old nanny with moko (facial tattoo). But now I’m older I can see the benefits to having grown up on the pā and the relationship I had with nanny. She was staunch in the Ringātū faith and often at church. We had nothing but each other, God and love. I learnt to share everything and to be grateful for what I had”.

Roka’s kuia died when she was seven years old and she was placed into care. “My mother had married and had a new family so I was brought up as a State ward. I found it hard moving between my Māori culture and European foster families so the Presbyterian Church helped in sending me to Turakina Māori Girls’ College (a Presbyterian Māori girls’ boarding school). As soon as I left there, I began giving back. I became a trained social worker and at a young age, a foster mother.”

Roka and her husband, Kerry Cameron, a mokopuna (grandchild) of the late Rev JG Laughton, purchased land “down south, moved buildings onto it and built homes, formed a trust, Te Whānau Arohanui, and began doing God’s work fostering children and running programmes for youth”. Today three of Roka and Kerry’s five children run the home and programmes “while we care for our mokopuna and mokopuna tuarua (great grandchildren). When we had our children we were learning to raise them and made mistakes; this second time is about building strong relationships. We teach respect for each other and Christianity, Mother Earth, kaupapa and tikanga”.

Roka says that grandparents bringing up whānau appreciate prayers from their fellow parishioners “but please do offer practical help, go mow their lawn, bring them baking, give some clothes for the younger children, get to know the grandparents in your community because if you do not know them, you don’t know what their needs are”.

Reflection

Read Prov. 13:22

Why do you think children tend to do better being cared for by grandparents and other kin than by non-related foster parents?

In your opinion, are there moral considerations in paying people to care for related children?



03

STUDY THREE:

What action can we take to support kinship carers?

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“... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience... Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Colossians 3:12,14

The social issues that lead to child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, imprisonment and poverty might not affect us directly but as Christians we are called on to help those in our community most affected. Some of the most affected are grandparents and kin carers; without doubt there will be families in your community and even within your congregation struggling to cope with raising kin. How can we reach out to these families and assist them?

The joy of caring

Reading the previous two chapters, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that taking care of grandchildren or kin is to embark on a life of stress and struggle. This is not necessarily so. In the most recent GRG Trust survey 80 percent of survey participants expressed that the children they care for had contributed *joy* to their lives. Participants reported satisfaction in being able to heal fragmented and injured lives, joy in seeing the children grow and learn, joy of playing and exploring together, joy in seeing the children develop love and trust in grandparents and whānau and friendships with other children, joy of companionship, joy in the knowledge that the children are safe, joy of having a second chance to raise good citizens, joy of kisses and cuddles; joy of laughter and the joy of being together through good times and bad.

The responsibility of providing support to kinship carers does not lie with any one organisation or sector. Government, voluntary organisations, churches, communities and families need to work together to address the issue of kinship care.

Government's role

Kinship carers often feel ignored and unsupported by government agencies. There is a strong feeling expressed in the New Zealand research that although the state affirms that families are responsible for care, it does not supply the resources needed to provide that care.

Many kinship caregivers are under financial strain because rules surrounding benefit eligibility are complex and ever-changing, and often appear to take little consideration

for their special requirements. Should grandparents on the DPB be required to seek work if the child is of school age?

A range of financial assistance, in addition to the Unsupported Child Benefit, Foster Care Allowance and Orphans' Benefit, is available but the system is overly complex and persistence is needed to find a way through it⁷.

A childcare subsidy is available for children aged three and four attending early childhood education services. The OSCAR Subsidy is for children aged five to 13. But to get this subsidy, the carer must be working, studying, training or doing a work-related activity through WINZ or have – or a member of their family have – ill health or a disability.

State assistance for housing problems is mainly in the form of the Accommodation Supplement and State housing (bearing in mind the extensive waiting lists). State housing is not always in good locations for schools or doctors, adding to transport costs and upheaval.

Children in kinship care receive health and education services on the same basis as all children. Given their often-disturbed backgrounds, they may require specialist attention. Specialised help for mental health and psychological problems can be hard to access.

What more could government do?

The GRG Trust and the Families Commission have made recommendations to central government for improvements to assist kinship carers. These include:

- » Better training for staff on income support entitlements for grandparent and kin caregivers.
- » More sensitive assessment processes and more positive relationships with government agencies, particularly CYF and WINZ.
- » Respite care, day care and after-school care provision to reduce the stress on caregivers.
- » Better access to social workers and specialist services.
- » Free medical care and free counselling for kin/whānau caregivers.
- » Better financial support, including accommodation, educational, medical and other costs associated with raising grandchildren.

CASE STUDY: Roy* is a retired Presbyterian minister. He and his wife, both in their 70s, have raised two grandchildren.

It was their daughter's lifestyle that led Roy and his wife to take on raising their two grandchildren.

"My daughter had a gambling addiction and was always at the pub. She would come home at midnight with her friends and put the stereo on blaring so my two grandchildren couldn't get any sleep and would take themselves to school very tired. The grandchildren asked to live with us. When we went to get them our daughter said, 'Well, #%*! happens'.

Their oldest grandchild is now working and has her own home. Roy says they continue to enjoy "a good and special relationship with her. She is more a daughter to us than a granddaughter."

Roy says they struggled raising their younger grandchild who is now flatting. "Since he moved out, we do not see a lot of our grandson and that is a pain we live with. There was a cost to raising him and I do not just mean financial, he has ADHD and can be selfish; emotionally he put pressure on our marriage. He didn't like being given boundaries as he had never had any before."

Roy says it was an effort to "get into the system to receive financial assistance because we had our grandchildren by choice. If we had had foster children we would have received more. We eventually got the Unsupported Child Benefit but there are things it does not cover; our grandson needed specialist help for his emotional problems and no one told us we were entitled to sickness assistance for his ADHD, we were having to dip into our savings. We spent thousands of dollars on all sorts of specialist health care".

Roy describes parenting as "a young person's job; when you are like us in your 70s you are aware that you can drop at any time. We would still help but we would not want to do it again, I don't think we could do it again".

** Identifying details and names have been changed.*

Simplify the legal system

Efforts to simplify the legal system and make it less daunting for kinship carers would be helpful, but the main issue is access to legal aid, particularly when grandparents and other carers are faced with legal challenges by the parents. Recommendations relating to the legal system include:

- >> Access to reliable information about legal rights, guardianship, day-to-day care and contact and support through the process.
- >> Judges being more proactive in preventing on-going custody challenges.
- >> Better financial support for kinship carers seeking permanent custody/guardianship; not being liable to repay legal aid payments.

Voluntary organisations

Kin caregivers' reluctance to engage with CYF and the legal system suggests a greater role for the voluntary sector, possibly under government contracts, to provide appropriate and on-going support.

Kinship carers report that they receive help from voluntary services such as Barnardos, Parentline, Speld, Open Home Foundation and the IHC, plus social workers and parenting programmes, but little help in kind, such as food parcels, clothing and furniture. The most frequently named organisation providing assistance is the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust⁸.

Churches

Only a small proportion of carers responding to the New Zealand surveys nominated a church as part of their support system and not all found their churches sympathetic to their situation. But the potential for churches to support kinship carers, within their congregations and community is considerable, once their situation is recognised and understood.

Churches can help grandparents and kin carers by:

- >> Forming a grandparents/kin carers church support group. Presbyterian Support Otago's Grandy's Group can offer advice on how to run such a group.
- >> Offering a holiday or a night off once in a while so they can recharge their batteries.
- >> Provide childcare cover in case of emergencies, such as hospital stays.
- >> Church members with appropriate experience, skills or knowledge could help kinship carers in their dealings with lawyers, WINZ and other agencies and accompany grandparents to appointments.
- >> Help financially with large one-off expenses such as a large winter power bill, start of the year school stationery and uniforms, first job clothes for interviews.
- >> Offer to pay for coaching in school subjects or sports fees.
- >> Invite the children to come to Sunday School and the kin carers to any church social functions.
- >> Share spare fruit and vegetables, offer good quality second-hand children's clothes. Offer an old computer for the children's homework.

Case Study: Presbyterian Support Otago Grandy's Group*

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

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

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

"It's a place that they can safely share their worries and they can also phone each other outside of the group if they choose to."

Flo says the group is the only opportunity most of the grandparents have to share their problems with other people in the same situation. "Many of the grandchildren are pre-school and the grandparents find themselves isolated at home; or the grandchildren are school-aged but the age gap with other parents is too large to bridge." Most of the group's members are over 70.

The grandparents in the Grandy's Group feel ignored and unsupported by the government, Flo says. "MPs say the right things about how grandparents raising grandchildren need more support - but then nothing happens."

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

Flo Clarke says that churches have a real opportunity to help grandparents raising grandchildren in their congregations and communities. "Ministers could facilitate a monthly grandparent's group similar to ours - but be aware that the meetings can very emotional, so have extra support available. Congregations can also help financially with one-off expenses."

*Singer, Angela. Spanz magazine, March 2010.

Family and friends

Despite family problems, many kinship carers are supported informally by extended family/whānau members. This is a good way to spread the load and allow some respite for the full-time carers. Family is less likely to be a source of financial support as they may have difficulties of their own.

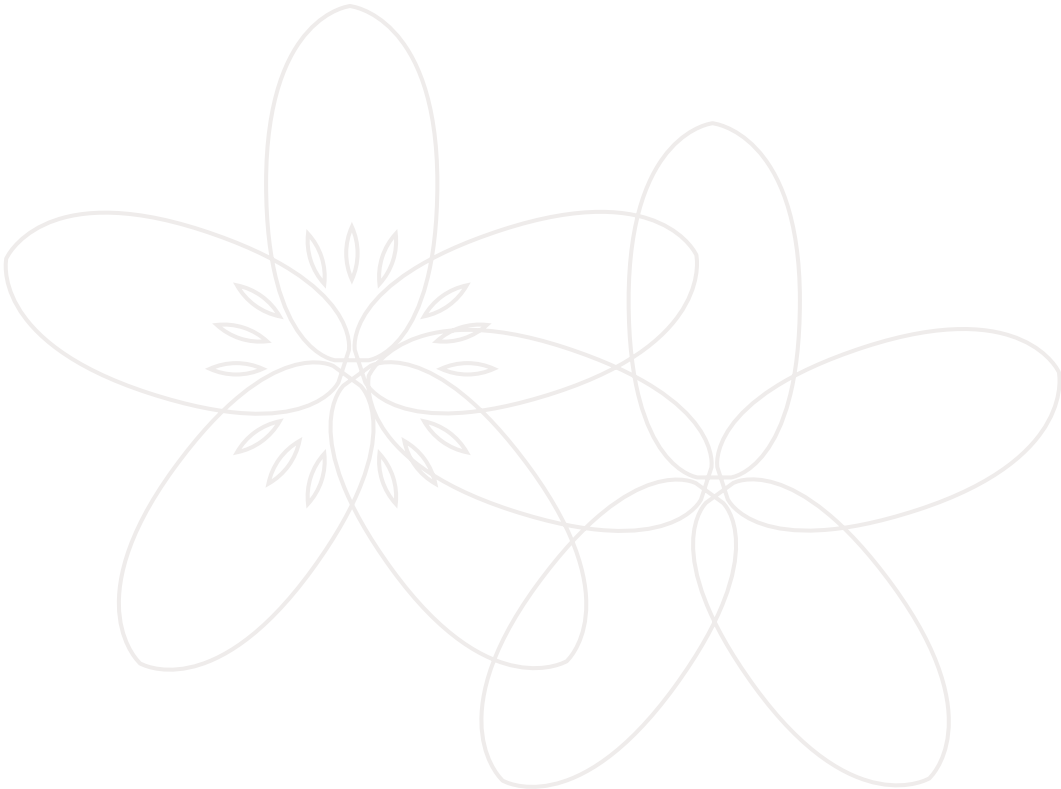
Better information

Kinship carers and grandparents raising grandchildren require a range of information to meet their financial, social, emotional and practical needs. But this may not be reliable, consistent or easy to obtain. Grandparents responding to the Family Commission research described difficulties accessing appropriate information from government agencies, and said there was a constant turnover of social workers and other staff in some regions.

Information should flow in both directions. Authorities and organisations need to know and appreciate the situation and problems of kinship carers. The GRG Trust makes this a priority and the Families Commission has set up a panel which provides an ongoing forum for grandparents raising grandchildren to express their thoughts and needs. Encourage kin carers in your congregation and community to take part.

⋮ Talking Point

⋮ What could your church do to support kinship carers in your community?



Bible Study: Kinship institutions*

Old Testament Israel could claim to have been the most family-centred society which has ever existed. Although "family" in early Israel was a very broad concept, there was no special term for the nuclear or conjugal family. The smallest family unit recognised in the language was the three or four generation (extended) family living in neighbouring houses on a single site. It is estimated that a three generation family normally would be a group numbering between 10 and 30. Clearly children would have been brought up among a large group of adult relatives rather than relating only to their parents. Larger kinship units were the territorial clan and the tribe. God regarded the whole nation of Israel as a family that came from a single ancestor, Jacob = Israel - or Jacob's grandfather, Abraham (John 8:31 ff) - and all Israelites would refer to each other as "brother or sister" (Deut 15:7).

A function of the clan was protection of the welfare of the three generation family and the individual. The clan cared for the poor and needy and this responsibility was laid on the nearest relative - the *goel*. The order in which different relatives qualified was brother, uncle, cousin, other (Lev 25:49; Num 27:9-11).

The story of Ruth shows how the clan welfare system operated in practice. Boaz is described as "a man of wealth, of the same clan as Elimelech" (Ruth 2: 1). Although of the same clan, he is not the closest relative. Clearly the obligations within the clan spread out a considerable relation-distance from the three generation family. The main responsibility of the "nearest relative" in a welfare context were: to raise up an heir for the three generation if the head of a three generation family died without children (Deut 25:8-9). In the story of Ruth, Boaz accepted responsibility to raise up an heir for his dead relative's three generation family.

The three generation family seems to have been the most important source of provision for the poor and needy in Israel. The categories of those eligible for welfare in Old Testament Law, as stated repeatedly in the texts, are those characterised by absence of a three generation family - namely, widows without children, the fatherless and foreigners (Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21). The same emphasis is found in the New Testament. James urges special compassion for widows and orphans (James 1:27), and Paul says that those who do not care for their relatives, and especially for those of their own household, are worse than unbelievers (1 Tim 5:8).

Jesus requires of Christians that we "obey" the Law (Matt 5:19). In terms of the Old Testament model of society, which emphasises broader kinship networks, could we interpret this to mean that Christians set their sights on *reactivating* the extended family?

*Schluter, Michael. Clements, Roy. *Reactivating the extended family*. Jubilee Centre, Cambridge, England. www.jubilee-centre.org

NOTES



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ – support for grandparents and extended family/whānau raising grandchildren and kin. Box 34-892, Birkenhead, Auckland www.raisinggrandchildren.org.nz/contact.htm

Presbyterian Support Otago Grandys' Group – for grandparents who have full-time care of their grandchildren & familyworks@psotago.org.nz (03) 477 7116

Health Camps – free respite camps for kin children over the school holidays (KidzaCool Adventures) www.healthcamps.org.nz

Citizens Advice Bureaus and Community Advice Centres – advice on approaching government agencies and the courts; a free, impartial and confidential service 0800 367 222 www.cab.org.nz/gethelp/Pages/home.aspx

Presbyterian Support Otago Buddy Programme – mentor programme & buddydn@psotago.org.nz (03) 477 7115

Presbyterian Support Southland Buddy – mentor programme & familyworks@southland.familyworks.org.nz (03) 218 6140

Presbyterian Support Blenheim Synergy Youth – mentor programme & nancys@psusi.org.nz (03) 577 9005

Presbyterian Support Family Works – www.familyworks.org.nz/

Social Service Providers Aotearoa Inc. – voice for organisations with contracting relationships with Child Youth and Family (CYFs) and Family and Community Services (MSD) www.theorganisation.org.nz

Strengthening Families – brings together families and agencies that can help www.strengtheningfamilies.govt.nz

Big Brothers Big Sisters – mentor programme www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org.nz (03) 5459864 / 021 1906 223

Big Buddy – male mentors for fatherless boys www.bigbuddy.org.nz

Man Alive Youth – mentor programme for boys <http://manalive.org.nz/boys.htm>

Child, Youth and Family (CYFs) – www.cyf.govt.nz

Work and Income (WINZ) – www.workandincome.govt.nz/

New Zealand Family Court – www.justice.govt.nz/courts/family-court/

Legal Aid – www.lsa.govt.nz/03clc.php

Law Centres and Neighbourhood Law Offices – free legal advice may be available www.communitylaw.org.nz/

New Zealand Law Society – Family Law Section www.familylaw.org.nz

Age Concern – www.ageconcern.org.nz/

Grey Power – www.greypower.co.nz/

Plunket – www.plunket.org.nz/

Parents Centres NZ Inc – support for carers and children aged 0-6
www.parentscentre.org.nz/

Raising Grandchildren Network - Australian parenting website
http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/raising_a_grandchild.html

The Open Home Foundation of New Zealand – A Christian child and family support service www.ohf.org.nz

Barnardos – child care and supervised contacts www.barnardos.org.nz

Foster Care New Zealand Inc – www.fostercarenz.netfirms.com

Parentline – a telephone service for advice on child rearing
www.parentline.org.nz/about-us

Oscar – after school care programme <http://oscar.org.nz/>

Porse – in-home help for family raising kin www.porse.co.nz

Skylight – grief support and resources for all ages www.skylight.org.nz/

What Will Happen If I Tell? – support for caregivers of sexually abused children
www.childsafenz.org/

Safekids NZ – national child injury prevention service www.safekids.org.nz

Parents Inc – parenting courses www.parentsinc.org.nz/cms/

Carers NZ – help for family and whānau www.carers.net.nz

Free National Caregiver training programme – www.caregivertraining.org.nz/

Parent and Family Resource Centre – supporting parents and families of disabled children www.parentandfamily.org.nz

Parent to Parent – support and information network for parents of children with special needs www.parent2parent.org.nz

Kiwi Families – guide to raising children in New Zealand www.kiwifamilies.co.nz/

Care Matters – CYFs newsletter
www.cyf.govt.nz/about-us/publications/care-matters.html

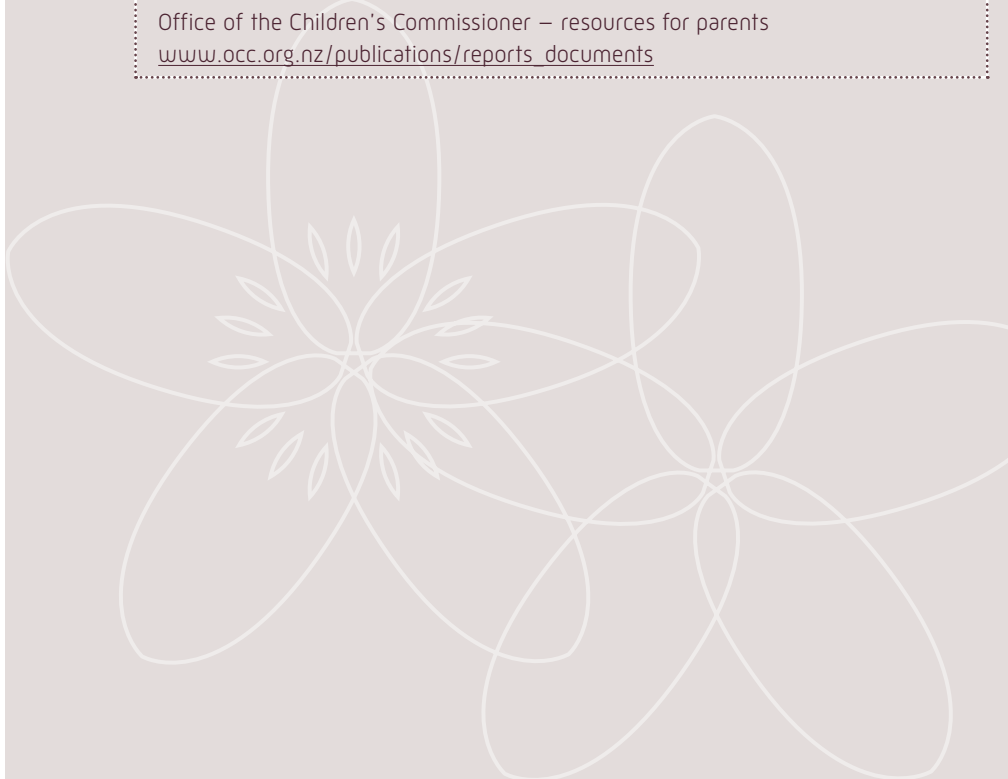
Tough Love – ways to cope with difficult children www.toughlove.org.nz/

Lets Thrive – resources on parenting, grief, depression www.letsthive.co.nz/

Parenting resources (Families Commission) – www.families.org.nz/parenting

Whānau Toko I Te Ora (WTITO) – Māori Women’s Welfare League parenting programme for Māori whānau, E mwwl@mwwl.org.nz

Office of the Children’s Commissioner – resources for parents
www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports_documents



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UMR Research (2009) *Changing Roles of Grandparent*, Wellington: UMR research for the New Zealand Families Commission.
- 3 Fuller-Thomson, Esme (2005) *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Canada: A Profile of Skipped Generation Families*, SEDAP Research Paper No.143, Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University.

COTA National Seniors (2003) *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, A Report of the project commissioned by The Hon. Larry Anthony, Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, COTA National Seniors, Australia.
- 4 Two surveys have been carried out by Jill Worrall, on behalf of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust. The results are drawn on extensively in this study guide. In 2004, 323 grandparents and kin caregivers, drawn from GRG Trust support group members, responded to a postal survey.

Worrall, Jill (2005) *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Charitable Trust Research Report - Grandparents and other Relatives Raising Kin Children in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Birkenhead Auckland: GRG Trust.

In 2008, a survey aimed a members of the GRG Trust who had been kinship carers for at least four years, produced 205 responses were received, of which 172 were from grandparents.

Worrall, Jill (2009) *Grandparents and Whānau/Extended Families Raising Kin Children in Aotearoa/New Zealand - A view over time*. Research Report, Birkenhead Auckland: GRG Trust. http://www.grg.org.nz/uploads/75791/files/GRGResearchReport_09.09.09.pdf
- 5 Worrall, Jill (2007) *Grandparents raising Grandchildren. A handbook for grandparents and other kin carers*. Prepared for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust N.Z. Third edition.
- 6 Worrall, Jill (2009) Quote from Executive Summary
- 7 *Work and Income New Zealand (May 2007) Help for Kinship Carers – A guide for people who are raising someone else’s child*. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development (probably now updated).
- 8 As the 2009 survey population was drawn from the GRG membership this result is not unexpected.





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