



spanz

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

AUTUMN 2012, ISSUE 49

Youth Ministry: growing future leaders

www.presbyterian.org.nz

The New Atheism: A Christian Response

The New Atheists are people like Oxford scientist, Richard Dawkins, journalist the late Christopher Hitchens and scientist Sam Harris. These three are well-known for popularising a particular brand of atheism through their best-selling books, *The God Delusion* (Dawkins), *God is Not Great* (Hitchens) and *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (Harris).

In September this year a group of academics at the University of Otago joined with scientists Bob White and Dennis Alexander from the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge and philosopher Stephen Evans from Baylor University in Texas. Their purpose was to consider the arguments of the so-called 'New Atheists' and offer a Christian response.

What is 'new' among the new atheists is their stridently expressed conviction that the central beliefs of religion are not merely false, but are positively harmful.

Religion, they contend, is the principal cause of violence and evil in our world and ought to be eradicated. It subverts science, fosters fanaticism, and is guilty of widespread cruelty and abuse. Hitchens even argues that religions are necessarily irrational and intolerant because religious people are convinced that they alone possess the truth and know everything.

If you are beginning to suspect that the New Atheists are dealing with a caricature of religion then you are right. Among the harshest critics of the new atheists are their fellow atheists. In a review of Dawkins' book, for instance, Terry Eagleton, an atheist himself, complained that the new atheists "invariably come up with vulgar caricatures of religious faith that would make a first-year theology student wince. The more they detest religion, the more ill-informed their criticisms of it tend to be."¹

Why then have they enjoyed so much support and widespread acclaim? A number of characteristics of contemporary Western culture help explain the uncritical acceptance of what are, quite frankly, a series of very weak arguments. I have space here to mention just two.

The first is widespread biblical illiteracy. Hitchens and company make outrageous claims about what the Bible says with no apparent appreciation of the context, literary genre, or theological nuances of the 'proof texts' they present. They insist that we read the Bible like the most naïve sort of fundamentalist and then scoff at the absurdities that result. Sadly, fewer and fewer people in our culture have sufficient understanding of the Bible to see the flaws in that kind of approach.

A second feature of our culture that allows many to be easily persuaded by the new atheist rhetoric is historical amnesia. The new atheists attribute all manner of evils to religious belief and argue that, when it comes to virtue, religious believers fall well below the human average.

This extraordinary claim is practically impossible to prove. But it has force because our culture has forgotten much of the contribution Christianity has made to shaping our world through medical care, education, social justice, art and music, community work, foreign aid, and so on.

Without doubt, much evil has been done in the name of religion. Religious people should face that fact with honesty and with a renewed determination to strive against the evil done in God's name. The new atheists make the mistake, however, of assuming that mention of the crusades, the inquisition, burning of witches, and atrocities in recent years by religiously motivated terrorists, reveals the true character of religious faith.

This argument depends on gross misrepresentations of history and a consistent failure to acknowledge the good that has been done in God's name. But a culture disposed already to finding fault with religious believers, has little interest, apparently, in checking the facts or in giving credit where it is due.



But even if those facts are checked and due credit is given, some imagined balance sheet of good and evil perpetrated by believers has no real bearing on the ultimate question of whether God does or does not exist. Reminders of the evil done in God's name gets us as far but no further than the salutary reminder that Christians, like all other human beings, have much room yet for moral improvement. If anything this reminder may help strengthen our moral resolve.

In contrast to the new atheist rhetoric, may we say that religious faith serves our moral formation well and helps to make us into better people?

An honest answer, I think, is, not consistently. Often it does, as in the case of those who laboured to provide hospitals, who tended to the needs of the sick during the middle ages, and those many, many Christians who have done so since. It is reasonable also to attribute the virtue and moral vision we applaud in people like William Wilberforce, Kate Shepherd, and Martin Luther King, to their Christian convictions. But often, too, religious people fail to live up to the ethical imperatives of the Gospel. There is no doubt that, as Christian theology has consistently reminded us, even believers remain sinners.

Are we therefore to condemn religious believers and, for the sake of consistency, all who have sinned. Or might the Christian imperative to forgive, the Christian conception of the workings of divine grace, and the Christian testimony to the compassion of God, provide a more hopeful and realistic way forward than the new atheists' insistence that we must rid ourselves of such notions if we are to forge a better world?

We must each, of course, make our own decision about that.

Professor Murray Rae is Head of Department of Theology at the University of Otago in Dunedin.

¹ Terry Eagleton, 'Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching', Review of *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins in *London Review of Books*, Vol 28, No. 21 (19 October, 2006) 32-4.

Spanz

Presbyterian Church of
Aotearoa New Zealand

AUTUMN 2012 Issue 49

Who we are

Spanz is published quarterly by the
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa
New Zealand,
PO Box 9049, Wellington, New Zealand

Editor

Angela Singer
angela@presbyterian.org.nz
Ph 04 381-8284

Advertising

Jose Reader
spanzadvertising@presbyterian.org.nz

Subscriptions

Katrina Graham
katrina@presbyterian.org.nz
Ph 04 381-8283

ISSN 1175 5202 (print)

ISSN 1179 3473 (online)

Next issue

Winter 2012
Advertising deadline
23 April 2012

Design

Tangerine

Printing

Lithoprint

Copyright

The contents of Spanz may not be
reproduced without permission of the
publisher. Opinions expressed in Spanz
are not necessarily those
of the Presbyterian Church of
Aotearoa New Zealand.

Cover Photograph

From top left clockwise:
Edmond Lai, Isabelle Kuan, Jane Huang
and James Koay. Image: PYM.

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

The Right Rev Peter Cheyne contributes a regular column to *Spanz*

What makes being a Christian so great?



There is the promise of eternal life. There is also the assurance that God loves us and is with us no matter what we face. Those things are wonderfully true.

However, I am intrigued by a few passages that suggest the joy is in serving. At the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples that their joy would be complete if they kept his commands and so remained in his love.

In John 4, Jesus said that his food (presumably that which energised, sustained and fulfilled him) was to do the will of the one who sent him and to finish God's work.

Paul frequently talked about the joy he had when he saw faith and loving service in the lives of his converts. He wrote to the Thessalonians, "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy." His mission brought him joy – the people and God's work in their lives.

Similarly, John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth".

At the beginning of another year we reassess our priorities and consider what we really want to achieve. We make plans and decisions that will shape our year.

Recent years have seen a lot of research go into what makes people happy. One of the findings has been that happiness is found in serving others. That is somewhat counter-intuitive if we think that happiness is found in meeting our own desires. And yet it shouldn't be any surprise to people

who know Jesus' teaching. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

So, what will it be this year, for you and your church?

My hope is that you will know the joy of knowing Jesus. May that relationship be your first desire and may it deepen and grow this year.

Knowing Jesus is the prerequisite for serving him. Without him we can do nothing. But I suspect that knowing him produces only half the possible joy. The rest is in the serving.

Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

Recently I talked with a young woman who works for Student Life on the Otago University campus. She became a Christian in her first year as a student. Now she works full time for Student Life - winning, building and sending.

Winning is about evangelism, about seeing people come to faith in Jesus. Building is about ensuring Christians understand their faith and know how to live it out. With about 125 students in Action Groups on campus, sending is about mission trips or about training those students to be able to share their faith.

Of course it is not all easy. Occasionally students are 'anti'. More often they simply don't care about Jesus and don't know why they should. Sometimes she wishes God would do certain things and God doesn't. She has to raise all her own support.

But for all that, I couldn't help but be affected by her enthusiasm and joy. She knows where God wants her to be at this stage of her life and she is involved in God's mission.

That story could be replicated many times in our churches. There are people throughout our Church who know where God wants them to be. They are involved in God's mission and exhilarated by seeing God at work changing lives.

As you plan for this year, may you plan to deepen your relationship with Jesus. Then may it be your desire to do the will of the one who has sent you and to complete that work. And may you experience the joy that results.

Growing the Church's FUTURE LEADERS



A growing number of churches are finding innovative ways to support their youth ministry and the Presbyterian Church is becoming more disciplined in its equipping and resourcing of youth leaders. **Jose Reader** discovers why now is an exciting time to be working with young people in the Church.



Up to 80 youths attend weekly events in Huntly. Here some of the Total Impact Youth Group learn pizza making.

It's estimated that the Church currently utilises the talents, skills and energy of around 1100 youth leaders, the vast majority of whom are volunteers. These leaders work not only with young people in the church, but also with those in the community, schools, sports grounds and lots of other places young people 'hang out'.

With so many youth leaders it might be surprising to learn that Presbyterian churches continue to experience more youth leader vacancies than there are people to fill them.

While there are many youth leaders with ministry education or a theological background, most have no formal training, and addressing this gap has been a focus for the Church's Presbyterian Youth Ministry (PYM) team.

Research shows that youth leaders who have some formal training are better equipped to work with young people, stay longer and are less likely to suffer burnout explains Dr Carlton Johnstone, the Church's national youth ministry development leader.

Over the last 16 months or so he has worked with the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership to develop and implement

two new professional development options for people who feel a sense of calling to work with young people. Both the Diploma in Youth Ministry, and a youth ministry specialisation track within national ordained ministry training are available for the first time in the 2012 academic year.

"These new options are about establishing a vocational pathway for those who see youth ministry as their calling. It's about our denomination valuing training for its youth leaders," Carlton says.

"We have high expectations for our ministers when it comes to theological training, and we want to see an increase in the number of our youth leaders who can think theologically when it comes to youth ministry."

While a Diploma in Youth Ministry is no guarantee of being accepted for national ordination studies, ordination is now an option for people who want to specialise in youth ministry as ordained ministers. Those with a Diploma must still meet the

Top image: from left Sami Brook, Jack McCarthy, Fala Pakau, Edmond Lai and Katie Lee. Image: PYM

requisite subject requirements and other criteria before being considered for national ordination studies.

It is hard work keeping the country's many Presbyterian youth leaders connected but Carlton believes there is enormous value in doing so.

Events such as Connect (which was sold out for the first time in 2011), regional gatherings that attract over 200 youth leaders from around the country, camps, discipleship events, and the PYM website are critical for keeping churches' young people and their leaders equipped and resourced in their leadership and faith journey.

Carlton speaks of a "great vibe" among Presbyterian young people and their enthusiasm about leaders who are out in the community doing wonderful things, and about leaders who are more connected with one another than ever before.

He acknowledges the Council of Assembly, and the assembly executive secretary, for their continued support, encouragement and resourcing of the national youth ministry team of which Carlton is one of two full-time staff.

This kind of support is happening locally too. Examples of congregations and presbyteries getting behind their youth leaders and young people are increasingly common, Carlton says.

For example, St Paul's Manurewa helped fundraise to send some of their young adults to Going Further 2012, a discipleship camp. Kaimai Presbytery included youth in a resourcing day with youth leaders running workshops and leading worship. Northern Presbytery now has a children, youth and families resource committee, which includes youth leaders, and is responsible for strategy, direction and resourcing for the region's commitment and ministry to young people.

Carlton says it's encouraging to see things like these happening. "PYM advocates strongly for youth participation in the local congregation, in presbytery and at a national level. But you have to create access points for that."

Providing space for young people to have a voice in the life of a church is a critical factor in developing a church community that has a healthy and vibrant youth ministry.

Leaders that are in trusting, reciprocal relationships with young people are another factor. Each parish is different in the way it supports its youth ministry. The church youth leaders profiled here discuss what inspires them and what their churches are doing to equip and resource both them and their young people.



Rebecca Connor, intern at Somervell Presbyterian Church, Remuera, gets angelic for her youth group.

Rebecca Connor, 26, was pleased to learn that she wouldn't have to give up working with young people to begin training for national ordained ministry.

Rebecca is the first person to begin national ordination training specialising in youth ministry, a specialisation available for the first time this year.

It was through a chance conversation with Carlton last year that Rebecca discovered that the youth ministry specialisation would be available.

"I really felt that God was calling me to national ordained ministry, but I still had a passion for youth ministry. So I was hesitant.

"This new course was a case of divine coincidence. I had no knowledge of it, but exactly what suited me was what was happening."

This year while doing block courses at Knox Centre, Rebecca is starting an internship at Somervell Presbyterian Church in Remuera, Auckland. She aims to work with young people in different contexts from those she's already experienced, as well as meeting the challenge of being a minister to all ages.

"I have a passion for seeing youth really engaged in a church context. Not 'here's

our youth, here's our kids', but really involved in the congregation, in the community, and not in a back room."

Rebecca believes engaging young people is part of the key to the future.

"Our youth numbers are dropping off. If youth drop off, they don't become young adults, and then you're not going to have newlyweds and couples with young kids. They need to have a real relationship with the church community and want to be a part of it as they grow older."

The church has been part of **Falen Tu'uga Stevenson's** life for as long as she can remember, and she expects it to be a big part of her future as well.

Together with others in her church – St Andrew's Presbyterian in Henderson, Auckland – Falen, 22, works alongside the parish's young people and helps coordinate a range of activities for them including games nights, trips, sports events and youth services.

"Our youth group is quite musical and really good at dancing and performing arts. We do plays. We also come up with and develop ideas, then perform them during the youth service."

Falen speaks highly of the regional youth service, which is usually held twice a year. It's great, Falen says, because "we get to meet other youth groups and network with them. I think the regional youth services have been really good in bringing people together."

"I think there's a lot of talented kids within the Presbyterian Church and I get really proud when I see them perform at the youth services. They've got so much passion and drive. They've got so much to give."

Giving young people responsibility is important, Falen believes.

"Church is always a good way to keep out of trouble. I've seen it. Some kids at my church who could have gone down that road haven't because their confidence levels increase. Just the little things like giving them something to do, like reading the Bible in front of the church or giving them the responsibility of setting up the mikes."

In addition to the work in her own parish, Falen is one of two young church leaders selected by PYM and the Presbyterian Church's Global Mission team as global mission youth ambassadors. This role will see Falen participate in a Global Mission opportunity.



Nga Larsen, right, a youth worker with the Wellington's Boys and Girls Institute

Nga Larsen, 27, is employed as a youth worker for Wellington Boys' and Girls' Institute, and is also the Wellington regional youth coordinator for the Presbyterian and Methodist joint youth ministry committee.

She believes church should provide young people with somewhere they are accepted and loved for who they are, and give them space to grow.

"What we've found is the wider whanau of the church is really important. The mix of ages is really key because it provides an environment that has young kids and the elders they can look up to.

"What captures the hearts of young people is serving the wider community. They are really into learning and figuring out how to live it out in their daily lives."

Nga came to youth work through a traditional path; she became involved in a friend's youth group at Wellington's St John's in the City Presbyterian Church when she was 14. When a youth worker role came up a couple of years later, she jumped at the chance to serve because she wanted to help others experience things like Easter Camp and weekends away, which were a key part of her faith journey.

"I think youth ministry is an important calling in itself, journeying alongside young people, supporting them in any way I can to get closer to God and get closer to who they are."

Giving young people opportunities to lead in any way is important, Nga believes, because that is how the church gets amazing leaders.

"We have great leaders at St John's because they have come to Wellington for university. They've been nurtured by other churches so we are really lucky. The reason they are such strong, amazing, loving leaders is that they have been nurtured themselves by young leaders, and they want to nurture others. They were encouraged to be leaders at a young age and can now be leaders themselves."

In a sentiment echoed by many Presbyterian youth leaders, Nga believes there are great opportunities in the Presbyterian Church that people can take advantage of from an early age.



Leilani Lemusu, left, with some of her Rolleston youth team.

2011 was a hard year for everyone in Christchurch, and one of the inspiring things for **Leilani Lemusu**, a youth worker in Rolleston, was seeing young people grow amongst the challenges presented by the earthquakes.

"Something in the resiliency and positivity of young people provides stability for us adults as we struggle through all of the earth's movements."

About to undertake a Master's in Social Work, Lani's passion is working with young people.

"I love the 'light bulb' moments. I love it when a young person just starts unlocking their own potential, when they start to realise what goodness they're capable of and how they can use it to change the world and spark hope in all of society."

Lani's role involves getting alongside young people in school, church and out in the local community. She works closely with Living Word Presbyterian and Hornby Presbyterian Community churches.

Working together with the local school is a big part of Lani's work. She spends 10 hours a week running games and activities, mentoring, tutoring and coaching sports teams. Outside of these school-based activities, she runs youth groups, and mentors young people who need extra care.

Lani sees churches as a great source of help and support for young people.

"Churches are places that provide an insight into the Kingdom of God and what it means to be part of the coming Kingdom. Part of that encompasses a greater sense of community where young and old are talking and learning from each other.

"We should never view young people as 'things to be taught', but rather as people who can teach us about life, technological advancements, society, culture, and much more."

Attending children's camps in her late teens inspired Lani to work with broken young people. But the young people are only part of the picture, she believes. A focus on the wider family is critical.

"Sometimes you can grow with a young person for years, but they'll still struggle with this other world that we don't see. I want to be part of the process that creates means for entire families to grow together."



Huntly's dynamic team - Aaron Henderson with his wife Amy

Aaron Henderson and his wife **Amy** are part of a volunteer team that attracts 50 to 80 young people to its weekly youth gatherings.

The Wednesday night outreach is only part of the picture. There is also a touch rugby team, youth camps, daytime events, and other get togethers that are all regular parts of the programme.

Aaron pays tribute to the Huntly Cooperating Parish for enabling the thriving ministry, and also to the team of people he and Amy work with.

"I'm a huge fan of the voluntary group leadership style that we're operating. It's great to work as a team. We all have different things we bring to the table and we encourage each other to keep going."

The young people who attend the outreach programme are typically from homes where there is not a lot of spare money, says Aaron, and the generosity of the parish in funding things like young people attending camps is also an important part of the success of the ministry.

Passion and energy is not something Aaron is short on. When asked to name a highlight from the last year, his response was, "Can I have three?"

A barn worship night in November, where 30 young people joined for worship for one and a half hours, and the last night of Easter Camp were his top picks. Aaron described that last night of camp as "an amazing night of Jesus encounter, incredible worship and Holy Spirit moving".

"Amy and I both love it the most when you just see young people click with their purpose and potential; when the light bulb comes on and they have an amazing awareness of who God wants them to be, and they pursue it."

Want to learn more about Presbyterian Youth Ministry? Visit <http://www.pym.org.nz/>

YOUTH WORKER'S PASSION TO HELP HASN'T AGED

When Chris Garland was eight years old, she felt God calling her to fulltime Christian ministry. She had no idea what that meant and was told by her church leaders, "You'll grow out of it."

That never happened. At 16, Chris was directing children's camps and now, 30 years later, her passion for discipling young people remains unabated.

"I love it. I just love seeing the results as kids grow and step into their own light."

Chris is the director of youth and children's ministries at St Andrew's Uniting Church in Whangarei, responsible for around 85 children and young people. About a third coming from community areas where life is tough and often violent.

Chris says mixing the 'church kids' with the 'community kids' has been challenging. She's had to reassure parents, especially of younger children, while at the same time insisting on high standards of behaviour.

"A ratio of 70 percent church kids and 30 percent community kids is about right. The church kids learn to accept differences without being pulled down by behaviour patterns they are not accustomed to. Instead, they're learning to reach out and help invite community kids into the light of Christ."

Encouraging teenagers to talk to each other has slowly built trust and helped break down social barriers. They've learnt that everyone is basically alike under the surface, with the same kinds of problems and insecurities.

Chris says she's not interested in providing "entertainment for Christian kids". In her experience, running youth groups focusing on social events drains leaders and produces little fruit. Her focus is discipleship and leadership development.

"I want to lead young people into a relationship with Christ. If they don't develop that, then as far as I'm concerned, I'm wasting their time and mine. But



Chris Garland and her dog Pilot. Chris's dogs often accompany her to the office, 'they are incredible counsellors and definitely keep every word they're told confidential'.

they're hungry for it. I can't keep up with how hungry young people are for depth and real-life stuff."

Every Wednesday, St Andrew's youth meet for an hour of "heavy duty" Bible study, followed by 90 minutes of lighter study and activities for new believers. Some of the older ones lead StAK (St Andrew's Kids) and others help with music, technology or camps. The plan is to have every age group discipling those younger.

"It's about deepening relationships and teaching them how to disciple others. It means spending time with young people and being available. I tell them I'm looking for FAT Christians – that stands for faithful, available and teachable – and I need to be one too."

Chris knows what life is like for some of the young people from the community. Being brought up in a Christian home did not stop her from experiencing her own tragedies.

"I've often been tempted to give up. What keeps me going is knowing who God is and God's calling on my life. Without God, I definitely wouldn't survive."

Chris says young children are having to cope with bigger problems than ever, including alcohol, family abuse and suicide. She's stopped a five year-old boy attempting to take his own life, and knows parents who ply their youngsters with alcohol to

keep them quiet. But she considers it a tremendous privilege to win young people's trust and walk beside those who are as broken and hurting as she once was.

"Hearing their testimonies gives me hope. God is active in their lives."

Chris's advice for others in youth ministry is simply prayer. She has the backing of a prayer team and links every child and teenager with an older person in the church who undertakes to pray for them regularly.

"They may never have a conversation or meet their prayer-sponsor, but that's the one thing that has made the biggest difference. I wouldn't dare do any of the things I do with the young people without that prayer support. And we train our kids to pray for and minister to each other too."

St Andrew's youth ministry is a "whole body ministry" she explains. Different people of all ages are invited to share their story with the youth and pass on their wisdom.

Another key, Chris says, is letting young people use their talents and skills to contribute to the services and life of the church. "Young people will step out into leadership if we're willing to show them they can. Everyone has something to contribute."

By Andrea Candy [Spanz](#)

New Pasifika Misionare **WILL FOCUS** **ON YOUTH**

The Presbyterian Church is like an extended family, says its first Pasifika Misionare, Don Ikitoelagi. "The family relationship goes hand in hand with the church family."

Don emphasises this vision to the young Pacific Island migrants he sees moving away from the church and more exclusively into their own families as they adapt to life in New Zealand.

"They find themselves needing to cope with work, budgeting and so on. They realise that the immediate family is the primary core group they take care of.

"A lot of younger people are doing quite well in their work and in their families, raising their children according to the Church's principles, yet they are not tagged as part of the Church. We need to explore ways in which the Church can become a place that feeds their spirituality."

Don believes that Pacific-community congregations are doing well in youth church attendance rates. "People could say young people come to church because they have to, and later they will make their own way and move out. That may be the case. But we need to look at ways in which moving out doesn't mean moving away from God. They are still part of the faith. They may not come to church every Sunday, and there's a host of reasons for that, such as work. But they come to funerals, for example, and so are part of the community's social support mechanism that helps grieving."

The Presbyterian Church's Assembly Executive Secretary, Martin Baker, says Don's ability to engage with young people makes him a great choice for the inaugural Pasifika Misionare, a two-year position part-funded by CWM.

Don has had plenty of experience with youth. He and his wife Ere have eight children, and they recently adopted two more infants. "An elderly lady came and said, 'Can you take this child?' She saw her family as so dysfunctional. It was like a Moses story. You can't say no." The second child was born while the mother was in jail.

Don knows from personal experience that threats of 'hellfire and brimstone' don't keep young people in the Church. Growing up in Niue, his father was a Congregational minister and very strict. "I took off the minute I was old enough.



The Rev Don Ikitoelagi, the Church's first Pasifika Misionare.

I avoided the church for many years. I got married, and then quietly found that all the fundamental teaching about life in my past had meaning."

He started attending the Presbyterian Pacific Islander Church in Newton while working as a tax inspector for the Inland Revenue Department. "Then I felt a strong calling to ordained ministry."

Both he and Ere studied for the ministry and were ordained in 1995 and shared their first ministry at the Wanganui Uniting Presbyterian Church.

Don also served as co-director of the Church's Mission Resource Team for six years. Most recently he has been the Uniting Church of Australia's director for Cross Cultural Mission and Ministry in Melbourne while Ere has been the minister at Knox Church in Parnell, a vibrant congregation with many young families in its congregation.

In his Pasifika Misionare position, Don will work closely with the five Pacific Island communities within the PI Synod. "I am not here to fix things," he says, "but to facilitate people asking the right questions: How can we be a Church today in Aotearoa

New Zealand? How are we feeding the younger people spiritually? And how can we influence those out in the community that do not express their faith in the way we are accustomed to?

"This raises the issue of the New Zealand-born Pacific Island young people. Too often the communities in the diaspora feel we have to maintain the culture in the way we are accustomed to. When people say, 'You are not a Niuean because you can't speak the language', I feel sad. These ultimatums aren't the way forward. If you have even one iota of Niuean, this makes you part of the Niuean community."

The Pacific Island Synod Clerk, the Rev Asora Amosa, says he hopes that even the name Pasifika Misionare will help ministries become connected – "not only between the fonos but within the Church. In the multi-cultural Church there's a tendency that when something happens in the Pacific sector, it's their issue, they deal with it. I have long advocated that we wrestle together with these things.

"The hope of the Pasifika Misionare is to bring coordination to the fore."

By Jane Tolerton [Spanz](#)



Church a light in its community

Standing out like a neon light in the heart of Taneatua is a purple church, home to about 50 parishioners and Patsy, the Reverend Patricia Kingi Koia, their minister.

It may be a small congregation but it provides Taneatua with an array of community ministries including a men's breakfast, children's programme, a craft group and coffee mornings, as well as visiting and prayer mornings.

And the community needs them all. Taneatua is a small settlement about 14 kms inland from Whakatane in the Bay of Plenty. Most of the 800 or so residents are Maori; a third are under 15 years old. About 40 percent of families have only one parent, and there are problems with addiction, alcohol and unemployment.

Patsy has been ministering in the Taneatua Maori Pastorate for seven years. She is adamant that parishioners have to lead the way in reaching out to the community.

"The church doesn't exist on its own. It's about people in the community. How we can reach people and encourage them to come to know the Lord. People are starting to respond as we get to know one another better."

Patsy began a Bible study group a couple of years ago focusing on the "Ministry

of Jesus," and followed that up by using the Moderator Peter Cheyne's GA10 booklet, *Disciple making - making disciples*. Eight people in their thirties are about to 'graduate' from the course and are preparing to put what they've learnt over the last two and a half years into practice.

The good news is that the study series has given birth to a string of practical ministries.

Puhi Koia leads a programme of pastoral care, taking communion to the sick and elderly. Cilla Onehi organises hospital visits to single expectant mums and mid-week coffee mornings, part of the parish's vision to see the children of the community nurtured by the church from preschool years through adolescence and on into adulthood.

Aroha Black runs a children's ministry two mornings a week for about 10 preschoolers and their mothers. Neither a preschool nor a kohanga reo, Aroha has the children singing as well as developing numeracy and reading in both Maori and English. The programme's so popular that parents want to expand it to three mornings next year.

Two elders, Tina Cairns and Biddy King, run a craft group on Thursday mornings. It's a great opportunity for a dozen creative people to swap ideas and the skills of

quilting, flax weaving, mosaics, clothes mending and garden crafts, as well as simply having a great time together.

Once a week, the church is open for prayer with Pastor Ra Koia. Church members also hold a prayer meeting on Thursday nights. Every few months the congregation has a combined service with another church in the community and one in Waimana, a neighbouring settlement.

Patsy is aware of the social problems in the area. She's grateful for a new health service that recently moved to Taneatua's main street. It offers mental health and addiction services using kaupapa Maori principles. Its vision is Mauri Ora, health and wellbeing for all the community. Patsy and her congregation share that dream.

"We've had some really good feedback, although some are still wary of the 'church' stuff", Patsy says. "We're not pushing ourselves as a church but as people who care. It's not about getting people to come to our meetings but saying to those in the community, 'We're here for you'. The whole focus is how to reach out to people."

By Andrea Candy [Spanz](#)

The Rev Patsy Kingi Koia with her congregation outside their purple church in Taneatua.

New MP expects his faith will shape decisions

The Rev Dr David Clark is one of a handful of new Members of Parliament to join Labour's much-reduced caucus following last year's General Election.

The new Dunedin North MP is married with a young family and, while Dunedin will still be home, he expects to spend much more time in Wellington to fulfil his duties.

David campaigned for the seat left vacant by Pete Hodgson on a platform of reducing the gap between rich and poor. He is passionate about improving outcomes for people on the margins. It's one of the reasons David decided to get into politics.

"Many Kiwis are isolated from their potential. Their contribution to society is limited by their restricted access to opportunities, be it job opportunities or education opportunities, and this marginalises them. We need to help them live their lives to their potential."

He chose to stand for Labour because the party's core values are consistent with his own. "My values are Labour values. I want to help build a stronger, more caring society."

"I find the growing gap between rich and poor abhorrent. It doesn't motivate anyone, and it makes most people feel frustrated. Worse, it leaves the most vulnerable people, including children, in poverty."

"In parliament you're affecting a bigger picture. I see the ability to affect more people for longer in my role as an MP."

David believes his faith will hold him in good stead in the sometimes challenging political environment.

"I feel supported in having a faith and people around me, including a church and a community. I come to politics out of a sense of calling. I'm here to honour that calling, and expect my faith to shape the decisions I will make."

Groups like prayer@parliament offer a gathering for prayer and Christian fellowship for those working in and around the Beehive. David expects to get involved in these meetings as and when he can.

His new role isn't David's first foray into central government politics. He cut his



David Clark at a 'fairness at work' rally in Dunedin.

political teeth as an advisor to the Hon David Parker between 2006 and 2007.

"I wanted to see how I could make a difference, and to see if I could survive and even thrive in the political environment."

The 18 months he spent as Mr Parker's advisor gave him useful experience, contacts and knowledge about the political process that will allow him to hit the ground running as the new MP for Dunedin North.

And although he has found life as an MP a bit of a whirlwind so far, more experienced colleagues have advised David that the first year as an MP is the hardest.

"The biggest challenge will be establishing myself in the role for both constituents and the party."

David joins Labour's recently elected deputy leader, and long-time friend, Grant Robertson (see box) in the halls of Parliament. Both men have strong backgrounds in working for social justice. From his role within caucus, David plans to advocate for policies that empower and enable children and families to reach their potential.

In the portfolio allocations announced in December, David picked up responsibility for Revenue. He is also the associate spokesperson on Tertiary Education.

Grant Robertson

Grant Robertson's contribution in parliament and his considerable potential was recognised last December with his election as the Parliamentary Labour Party's deputy leader.

Grant, 40, grew up in Dunedin. He is the son of Yvonne Wilkie, director of the Presbyterian Archives. He has been the MP for Wellington Central since the 2008 General Election.

Grant has a commitment to social justice, a commitment that has been at the forefront of his work as a New Zealand diplomat at the United Nations, and managing New Zealand's Overseas Aid Programme to Samoa. Before entering parliament, Grant was advisor to both Marion Hobbs, then Minister for the environment, and Prime Minister Helen Clark.

As well as being Labour's deputy leader, Grant has portfolio responsibilities for the environment, tertiary education, and skills and training.

By Jose Reader Spanz

St Paul's plants gift in community

St Paul's Kaikoura has decided to re-gift land it was given 142 years ago back to its community and to work with a number of community partners to replant the land with native trees and provide a sanctuary for reflection.

The vision for the project came from the late Murray Davidson, a long time elder at St Paul's. During a visit to the Holy Land, Murray was inspired by a visit to the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem which some believe to be the site of the burial and resurrection of Jesus. The visit led Murray to see a new possibility for some of the parish's apparently unusable land.

Murray's dream was to re-establish an area of native forest on the land on Kaikoura's South Bay. The restored forest would include rest areas and tracks linking up with established walkways to rebirth a renewed environment, an oasis that draws from the past and provides a sanctuary for the future.

The Rev Ralph Penno, effectively an interim minister at St Paul's, enjoyed working with Murray who died late last year.

"Murray was a visionary, passionate about the restoration of land and the community. His vision drove the restoration project and helped unlock resources that have also enabled St Paul's to move ahead and appoint a full time community worker."

Conscious that the life of St Paul's and that of Kaikoura's Takahanga marae have long been intertwined, the parish sought the blessing and cooperation of the local iwi for the plan. The parish assured them that any tapu or historically significant areas would be respected, including one of the largest pa sites in the South Island, some of which lies on the parish's property.

The land is part of the Kaikoura purchase and had belonged to Ngati Kuri. It was given by the Government to some of Kaikoura's earliest pakeha settlers in 1874 for the establishment of a Presbyterian parish. Murray was descended from two of those original settlers.

In 1877 the Rev William McAra began a ministry at Kaikoura. But the town grew up some distance from South Bay and St Paul's original churches and manse were built closer to the town than the gifted land.



In October 2011 Murray Davidson's family gathered to plant a Kowhai tree in his memory at the He Timatanga Hou (New Beginnings) project in Kaikoura.

Murray believed a 2.5 hectare portion of this gifted land that is unsuitable for any commercial use could be restored to its original state and re-gifted to the community as a place of peace, tranquillity and spiritual restoration.

Two years of planning and fundraising have connected the parish with a host of community partners including the Department of Conservation, Te Runanga o Kaikoura, New Zealand Forest and Bird, Creation Care Study Programme and Kaikoura High School.

The project has also received funding support from Kaikoura's Encounter Foundation. Director Lynette Buurman says they were excited to be involved with an initiative that benefits the whole community.

"It's a neat project. It gives the community the opportunity to enjoy the natural environment. We think it's a fantastic cause and we're committed to it in the long term."

The four-year project has been two years in the planning. In May last year the first totara tree was planted. Eighteen hundred other seedlings soon followed and over the next three years a total of 14,000 new native trees will cover the site to the east of the Kaikoura racecourse.

In October 2011, Moderator the Right Rev Peter Cheyne, a former minister of St Paul's, along with community members who have helped make the vision a reality,

planted a small grove of kowhai trees to launch the project. At the same ceremony Murray's family gathered to plant another kowhai, as a memorial to his life.

The parish is now in the process of taking the significant step of handing the reforested land back to the District Council. A Memorandum of Understanding will ensure the land that once belonged to the people of the district will be reinstated into their care once again.

By Chris Nichol [Spanz](#)

Epworth
BOOKS

Celtic Pilgrimage
with John O'Donohue - DVD

Zone 1
54 mins.

\$29.99
+
p&p

"Visually stunning and spiritually uplifting...
a treat for the eye, for the heart and
above all, for the soul." *The Irish Times.*

www.epworthbooks.org.nz
Ph: 0800 755 355

Archives: looking back and moving forward

If stood end-to-end, the shelving that stores the impressive collection of Presbyterian historical records would stretch for almost 2.5km.

The collection holds 150,000 images, thousands of ministers' papers, mission records from as far back as the early 20th century, a variety of General Assembly, presbytery and parish records and an audio library.

Most of the records are housed in the redeveloped archives centre at Knox College in Dunedin.

Since the 2009 renovations that enabled Archives to move out of one of Knox's cramped basement spaces, the archives facility now benefits from climate-controlled storage, to better maintain document condition, and a dedicated reading room.

Archives director Yvonne Wilkie can't speak highly enough of the updated facilities which she says have significantly improved access and usability of the Church's historical documents.

She estimates that the Archives team processes around 900 requests for information each year. One third of these requests are for people to visit the archives to do the research themselves. The remainder pay a fee for the Archives team to do the research on their behalf. This generates \$10,000 annually, a significant if small contribution to the Archives' running costs.

Academic scholars from all disciplines are significant users of the Presbyterian archival collection.

"Recently we were approached by an anthropologist who was planning an archaeological dig in Vanuatu. The mission records available helped refine and narrow down the location of the dig site", Yvonne says.

But by far the largest group of users are genealogists and family researchers. Yvonne says the purpose of that research has changed over time.

"Historically researchers have been interested in quantifiable information, like whether their relative was baptised, and when and where that happened. These days the research tends to be more about what motivated and inspired their relative in church life."

By working with the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, through workshops and raising awareness of the services offered by the Archives team, Yvonne actively encourages parishes, ministers and theological students – none of whom pay to use their services – to make better use of Archives.

While ministers and parishes regularly access archive records, they are by no means the largest group of users, explains Yvonne.

"Ministers are often looking for historical facts for a sermon, or they might request information about a new parish they are moving to, to get a feel for the culture of the place. Parishes ask for photographs and other information for anniversary celebrations. And of course, parishes contact us about storage and retrieval of their records.

"During a transition in the life of a parish, perhaps a move or a merger, it can be encouraging for a parish to recall records of their history and realise it's not the first time that this has happened."

The services Archives' staff offers include visits to ministers to help them sort through a lifetime of records. To help make better use of the historical records Yvonne also offers parish workshops throughout the country on "how to use your church history in your faith journey".

Others accessing the Presbyterian historical records include television researchers, authors and the Waitangi Tribunal.

Following the Christchurch earthquake, many parishes have become more aware of the fragility of their historical records and there has been a steady stream of documents arriving at Archives from around the country, not just from Christchurch.

Natural disasters are just one of the enemies of historical records, Yvonne says. Poor storage, often in a cramped fireproof safe, is a more common problem. "The safe, relied on by many parishes around the country, is often too small or otherwise inadequate to store parish history, and records quickly become damaged," she says.

Yvonne encourages parishes to talk to the Archives team about how and where to store records. She says that even though the records may be kept in Dunedin, parishes can access them without charge as and when needed. Access Archives online at <http://www.archives.presbyterian.org.nz/>

By Jose Reader Spanz



Sylvia Yuan, who is completing a PhD on NZ women missionaries in China, looks through Archive's Presbyterian South China Records, one of its most popular collections for academic research. The records date from 1893 to 1951.

Presbyterian Women finds future direction

Wanted: Presbyterian women to join with others for mutual support and outreach, both in New Zealand and beyond.

That's the message Presbyterian Women New Zealand's coordinators hope to convey at their national Gathering in Christchurch in April. And the association particularly wants younger women to attend the conference to share ideas on how to shape the organisation's future.

The Association of Presbyterian Women (APW as it used to be known) has existed for 50 years but its membership is ageing and declining, according to national Convenor Jan Harland. Fresh ideas are needed now if the organisation is to grow.

"We want to get across that it's not a closed group. All women can belong and it only costs \$6 a year to become a member. Everyone's input is valuable as we look for ideas on how to grow in the future."

Communications co-convenor Faatali Leiua says that although roles have changed women still value the encouragement and friendship an organisation like Presbyterian Women can provide.

"The older generation has worked hard in support of lots of different activities over the years. We want to continue that emphasis, but also appeal to younger generations.

"The ways women can participate are quite different now, because many work outside the home or have had children at an older age. We need to look at issues like that and ask how we want our branches to look over the next 20 years. We want women to come and be part of the growth."

One option being considered is to employ a young person to publicise Presbyterian Women New Zealand using a \$20,000 bequest from Dr Nan Burgess, a former APW convenor, Principal of Knox Theological Hall and ordained minister. The national coordinating group has agreed to fund someone who can connect with younger Presbyterian women and make the organisation meaningful to coming generations.

Pasifika representative Fa'aolotaga (Ola) Leasi is particularly enthusiastic about encouraging Pacific Island women to be part of the association. Mothers have a strong influence in Pasifika communities, she says, and if the 'mamas' are involved in church activities, chances are their children and teenagers will be too.

"Presbyterian Women recognises the role of mothers and their service in mission. By encouraging women and sharing with our mothers and sisters in Christ, we can show them that they are more than mothers – they can be missionaries as well."

The association is strong in Wellington where Ola is based, and she would like to see it become even more diverse by reaching out to women of all Island nationalities and strengthening connections in the Pacific region.

Everyone has something to offer from their own culture or language group, she says. A big group of Pasifika women is expected to attend the conference, along with representatives from the Korean community and invited guests from Vanuatu.

Presbyterian Women has always placed a strong emphasis on mission. The national body has special consultative status as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In addition, every year it cooperates with the Methodist Women's Fellowship to support a particular mission project. This year's focus is "Mums and Kids". Seventy percent of the money raised will go to Palestine through CWS, and 30 percent will be used by Kids Friendly for the benefit of children's workers in Methodist, Presbyterian and Cooperating congregations.

The organisation has also highlighted the importance of training younger women. It fundraises to provide grants and scholarships for Turakina Maori Girls' College as well as study grants for women of any age who want to further their education. Other scholarships enable young women to attend Presbyterian Youth Ministry's annual youth leaders' training conference Connect, and the discipleship-in-community Going Further experience on Great Barrier Island.

Presbyterian Women's national Gathering will take place in Christchurch from 20 to 22 April. Guest speakers include John Hunt who has written widely on Gaelic spirituality, Turakina old girl Gwen Neave who is also an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit, and Christchurch Youth Court Judge Jan McMeeken.

For further information and registrations for the National Gathering, please contact National Secretary, Valerie Anderson, PO Box 105, Alexandra or see the Presbyterian Women webpage <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/association-of-presbyterian-women/news-and-upcoming-events>

By Andrea Candy Spanz



PSDS

Special offer

4.65%

interest per annum for
18 months on new and
additional deposits
made before
31 March 2012

(subject to change without notice)

Presbyterian Savings and Development Society of NZ (inc)

An attractive interest rate

from a 40-year established Presbyterian institution

DEPOSIT FORM

Presbyterian Savings & Development Society of NZ (Inc.)
PO Box 26-210, Epsom, Auckland 1344

Investment Notice
available on www.psds.co.nz

Title/Full Name: _____

Address: _____

IRD Number (new depositors only): _____

Parish: _____

Amount of deposit enclosed: \$ _____

Tax Rate: 10.5% 17.5% 30% 33% (please circle)

Interest to be:

Compounded Paid to me (please circle)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

NZCCSS urges churches' advocacy for the most vulnerable

Typical New Year's resolutions might include losing weight, watching less television or reading more books. But ask Paul Barber, a policy advisor for the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) and you'll find the Council's goals for the coming year are much, much bigger.



Paul Barber, a policy advisor for the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services.

Its goals include advocating for policy change to reduce unemployment, income inequality, and to improve the quality of housing and the lot of impoverished children.

One of these on its own would be a massive task. But Paul, a member of the parish council of St Andrew's on the Terrace Presbyterian Church, Wellington, is heartened that during last year's election, six of the eight parties elected to Parliament had policies to reduce income inequality.

Even so, he knows there's an enormous amount of work to be done to translate those good intentions into community benefit.

"Welfare reform, the impacts of inequality, the housing issues we face, and the issues for children, they are massive issues. We hope that the Government will take action," he says.

"New Zealand's not really set up at the moment to do things that will improve the lot of the most vulnerable. There's very little in place to help change the situation for low income New Zealanders. So I'm afraid it looks like there are difficult years ahead, and that means churches and the social services really need to become strong advocates for those who are not getting the assistance and help they need."

One of the biggest issues Paul sees is the plight of tens of thousands of New Zealand children whose welfare, health and safety

are at risk. This month marks the closing date for submissions on the Government's Green Paper, a discussion document on vulnerable children. Later this year a White Paper will be released and Paul says NZCCSS is trying to raise awareness of the issue by posting information online and in magazines.

"We are really concerned that there's too much focus on [the crises], that they just want to fight the fire not really realising that that's really only a symptom of what's going on for a lot of kids in this country.

"That's a result of choices that have been made, socially and economically. If those aren't addressed, then it doesn't matter what you do at the tip of the iceberg, you're going to have more cases pushing through."

The work on the Green Paper is linked with the work NZCCSS began last year with the Closer Together Whakatata Mai campaign to reduce income inequality. During 2011 more than 1500 people signed up to support the call to reduce income inequality following the campaign's launch in June. That work is far from over, and NZCCSS hopes the Government will seriously look at its financial priorities.

"You might ask yourself why it is more important to build roads than to support families with children in poverty. Why is it so important to bail out a finance company with 1.6 billion dollars of taxpayers' money when we aren't prepared to pay the 800 million it would cost to lift the poorest

families out of poverty? Those are the kinds of choices we're making as a country."

Paul maintains that until we grapple with the rising income gap, the Council's remaining priorities are much harder to address because inequality underpins things like "welfare dependency" and poor housing.

The NZCCSS doesn't carry this load alone, says Paul. Everyone has a part to play, at parish level right through to the church leaders who regularly meet with the deputy prime minister to try and effect change. Everyone can do something, from lobbying local and central government on social issues, to just being aware of what social services, including Presbyterian Support, make available to those in need.

Simply sitting beside someone who is struggling can help in the simplest way, he says.

"It's important for people to really listen to the experience of people who are in need and not to make judgements based on their own prejudices. If you listen you begin to understand all the various barriers that are placed in the way of people really participating in the community, and the pressures that are put on people."

Find out more about the work of NZCCSS at www.nzccss.org.nz

By Rebekah Burgess **Spanz**

Letters to the editor

Being a minister I don't get many Christmases off, but in 2010 I was able to spend that time away with my family on holiday.

My family have diverse denominational tastes, and so we decided to cruise past the local churches a few days before Christmas, agreeing to attend the first one that advertised the time of their Christmas Day service. We went past five, including the Presbyterian church, which had no signage. The sixth was the Baptists, they had a massive sign. We went there.

Already as a new year begins, two families from my parish have told me they missed out on Christmas Day worship. They showed up at the Presbyterian/Uniting church where they were holidaying, at the usual time as advertised out front, only to find the service was ending. Turns out the Christmas Day service was earlier, but no one had advertised the fact.

Advertising service times isn't hard, but it is surprising how many churches don't. Maybe we can make it a New Year's resolution for 2012?

Rev Nathan Parry
Wellington

Spanz welcomes letters to the editor.
Please email
angela@presbyterian.org.nz

In the last issue of SPANZ, Andrea Candy quoted the Rev Ian Hyslop from St Andrew's United Parish in Geraldine.

Rev Ian Hyslop stated that "Funding cuts to MSD initiatives including OSCAR and social workers in schools are a major retrograde step".

I can assure you that there has been no cut in funding to either the OSCAR or Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) programmes as stated.

In fact, there have been two significant funding injections for the OSCAR sector and an expansion of Social Workers in Schools programme announced just last week.

Budget 2010 saw a \$4.3 million investment (over four years) to improve OSCAR programmes.

This was topped up with further \$2.8 million (over three years) to ensure grant levels remained the same as more and more programmes come on stream.

The Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) programme has been extended to all decile 1 to 3 schools raising the number of schools from 285 to 673 at a cost of \$11.1 million.

The school-based social workers will also be backed up by a 10 percent increase in the number of frontline Child, Youth and Family social workers.

Marion Heeney

Service Support General Manager,
Child, Youth and Family

Parishes it's free to Subscribe to Spanz

Please return this form to:
Editor, Spanz, Presbyterian Church,
PO Box 9049, Wellington, New Zealand
Or email: spanz@presbyterian.org.nz

Title Name

Address

An individual subscription is \$18.00 per year within New Zealand. Please include payment with your subscription request.

WE PRINT Offering Envelopes

We also print . . .

- INFORMATION BROCHURES
- AWARD CERTIFICATES
- WEEKLY BULLETIN SHELLS
- LETTERHEADS
- LETTERBOX FLYERS
- HYMN NUMBERS
- VISITING & WELCOME CARDS
- TRACTS AND BOOKLETS

Quality printing at a sensible price

GTO
printers

Tel 09 480 0218
23 Enterprise Street
Birkenhead Auckland
graham@gtoprinters.co.nz
www.gtoprinters.co.nz

EVERMORE BOOKS

Specialists in Second hand
Christian Books

Christian books
bought and sold



Evermore Books Ltd
9 Ellis Ave
Mt Roskill
Auckland 1041

Ph: 09 626 2256

www.evermorebooks.co.nz

Email: cbooks@xtra.co.nz

Mon - Fri: 9.30 - 5.30
Sat 10.00 - 5.00

Open everyday except Sunday
and public holidays



100 YEARS

ST. DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OTOROHANGA 100 YEARS

We will be celebrating on
19th & 20th May, 2012
REGISTRATION \$20

Enquiries or registration to
Aileen Berrigan,
47 Hinewai St. Otorohanga 3900
Email goldiedog@xtra.co.nz

Computerise your Church records with

Membership Made Easy Church Register
Envelopes Made Easy Offerings Manager

See them at www.cel-software.co.nz

76B Wilsons Road South, St Martins,
Christchurch 8022 Ph. (03) 960-5289
Email: celeme@paradise.net.nz



Presbyterian Investment Fund

Together,
we can
grow our
funds.

Pooling parish and other church trust funds in the PIF earns you higher interest rates without locking in your money.

» secure online access

» no fees

» sound investments

Sorry, this fund is not open to individuals or to non-Presbyterian Church groups.

For more information contact
Heather McKenzie
Church Property Trustees
P O Box 9049 Wellington 6141
ph 04 381 8290 or 0800 424 872
email heather@presbyterian.org.nz

THEOLOGYMATTERS

Recent hikes in insurance premiums following the Christchurch quakes and the decision by Ansvar Insurance to cease providing cover for New Zealand churches have raised both practical and theological questions concerning property and insurance. The Presbyterian Church's Insurance Task Group asked the Doctrine Core Group to offer guidance in relation to the latter. Here in a nutshell is what they said:

Churches have a duty of care to ensure that their buildings are not endangering the lives of those who use them. This is implicit in loving our neighbours and our enemies as we love ourselves. That principle is evident, for example, in the instruction of Deuteronomy 22:8 for new houses to be built with parapets lest "bloodguilt" be incurred as a result of anyone falling from their roofs.

It is unrealistic to expect that exercising a duty of care in relation to buildings will eliminate all risk associated with their usage. Moreover the call to discipleship is inherently risky. But exercising a duty of care will entail weighing up legal and moral obligations, and doing what is both reasonable and responsible.

The stewardship of resources, including buildings, is not in conflict with being a missional church. In fact, properly speaking, good stewardship is making missional use of our resources, including buildings. Whether or not, and in what way, buildings represent missional stewardship will be a matter of contextual discernment for Christian communities. After all, it can be a fine line between having buildings that serve congregational mission and having buildings that, because of poor design and the burden of cost associated with them, actually become an obstacle to mission.

The discernment process may be assisted by asking the following questions:

- 1 What are the practices and activities that most clearly identify our church community as the body of Christ?
- 2 To serve these practices and activities, what sorts of buildings are needed, not only in practical or functional terms, but also in terms of what they represent, symbolise and communicate?
- 3 If the current buildings were destroyed, would they need to be replaced? If yes, with what? If no, could we still be a

missional church, and what would our life together look like? What options are available?

- 4 In light of responses to the above questions how should we assess the merits of insuring our present buildings? Is it essential that we insure for full replacement? What level of cover is appropriate? What impact would insuring or not insuring have upon present and future mission?

Whilst the above questions relate mainly to the local situation, Presbyterian churches and Cooperating ventures are part of a larger Church that is organised regionally through presbyteries and UDCs. It is therefore important to ask how local considerations and preferences fit within regional mission strategies and priorities: How do decisions about buildings and insurance fit within the regional vision of mission priorities discerned by the presbytery or UDC?

For those who are interested in thinking further about these sorts of issues, I recommend a 2008 booklet produced by the Uniting Church of Australia's Synod of Victoria and Tasmania called, *A Theology of Property for a Pilgrim People*.

Graham Redding

Principal, Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership

Want to advertise
in *Spanz*?

With a print run of
16,000

and a readership at least double that, *Spanz* is the way to reach Presbyterian and Uniting churchgoers throughout New Zealand.

CHECK OUT OUR RATES ON

www.presbyterian.org.nz/publications/spanz-magazine
or contact spanzadvertising@presbyterian.org.nz

Church Lenten resource encourages reflection on families

A new booklet of 2012 Lenten reflections has been produced for parishes by PresCare. The reflections, one for each of the 40 days of Lent, focus on the Presbyterian Church's concern for families and children.

Created in partnership with Presbyterian Support, the booklet provides Bible readings and meditations for people to follow day-by-day in the weeks leading up to Easter, either on their own or in small groups.

PresCare project manager Thomas Mitchell says the studies focus primarily on a personal relationship with God and they also challenge readers to become agents of loving transformation within their communities, especially where children and their families suffer from injustice.

"This is where the Church shares a common commitment and concern with Presbyterian Support's Family Works and why the two organisations want to work more closely together through the PresCare partnership," says Thomas.

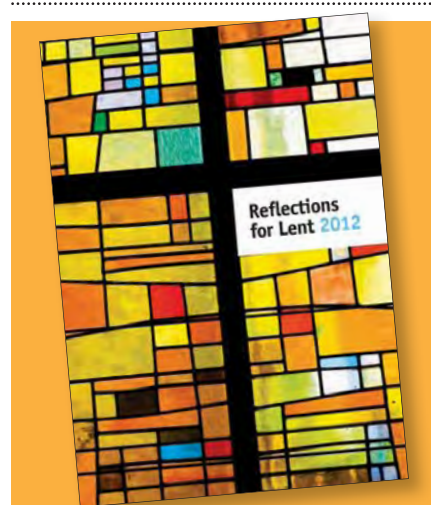
Presbyterian Support's PresCare sponsor, Dr Rod Watts, says walking alongside distressed children and families to help them discover a brighter future is central to the work of Family Works social workers and counsellors.

Assembly Executive Secretary Martin Baker agrees. "Peace, justice and caring for the most vulnerable are the basics of our Christian faith. They lead us to prayer and practical action as well as support for a prophetic voice that speaks to the underlying causes of such high levels of family violence in a country which is otherwise blessed in so many ways."

The free booklets cover all the 40 days of Lent including Holy Week and will be available to all Presbyterian and Union parishes in time for Ash Wednesday on 22 February.

Later in the year, PresCare and Kids Friendly will promote an art and writing competition on the theme, *Love reaches out*. Children aged three to 12 will be invited to think creatively about how love affects them and how they can help make things better for others. Prizes will be awarded at both regional and national levels.

Thomas says, "Family violence is not just someone else's problem. It really doesn't



PresCare 2012 Lenten reflection booklets will be in parishes this month and can also be downloaded from the Church website.

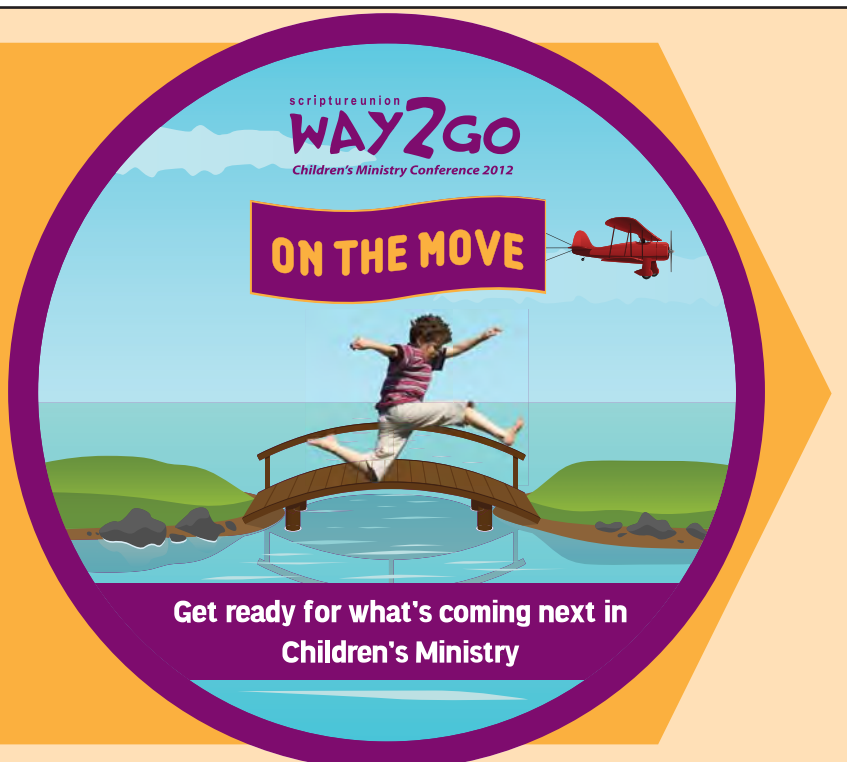
matter whether you have children or not or even whether you are a child yourself. We can all offer love, and that's where the PresCare partnership is encouraging people to start their journey".

Download the 2012 PresCare Lenten reflections at <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/prescare>

By Andrea Candy Spanz

WAY2GO is a quality children's ministry leadership experience.

Whether you're a new volunteer or an experienced children's worker this conference will be vitally important for you so come as a team and enjoy it together!



register online at
www.scriptureunion.org.nz

Wellington

9.30-4.00, Saturday 10 March 2012
Elim International Church
22 Tennyson Street, Te Aro
Registrations close 1 March.

Auckland

9.30-4.00, Saturday 24 March 2012
Elim Christian Centre
159 Botany Road, Howick
Registrations close 15 March.

Dunedin

9.30-4.00, Saturday 31 March 2012
Mosgiel Presbyterian Church
11 Church Street, Mosgiel
Registrations close 22 March.

Former investment analyst's long term investment in Myanmar

Angela Norton has a talent for friendship and a passion for justice – especially for the people of Myanmar.

Since her first visit to Myanmar in September 2007 with her father the Rev Andrew Norton, Angela has been back seven times and now works part time as the national coordinator of the Myanmar partnership between the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

Her first trip was meant to be a holiday, a break from her job as a bank's investment analyst. But it turned Angela's life upside down. Myanmar opened her eyes to a different world and to her surprise, in the midst of extreme material hardship and life under a repressive regime, Angela discovered people who were kind, compassionate and generous.

"They had the biggest smiles you've ever seen. I couldn't understand why they were so happy when they lived in such poor conditions."

Within a week of Angela returning to Auckland, the media was dominated by the 'Saffron Uprising'. Demonstrators led by thousands of saffron robed Buddhist monks took to the streets in protest against the military junta's rule.

Angela could hardly believe this was the same country she had just visited. She was deeply worried about her new friends there. Eight months later, Myanmar's suffering intensified when Cyclone Nargis brought with it the worst natural disaster in Myanmar's recorded history.

"One thing that kept coming back to me was that the people I'd met just wanted our friendship. That was the biggest thing we could offer them. They said, 'Please come, we need you to come and visit us, we need to hear about life in New Zealand and life outside Myanmar'. They were just so isolated within their own country."

Angela became increasingly unsettled by the sharp contrast between her life in New Zealand and life in Myanmar and wondered what she could do to help. At the end of 2009 she left her job and enrolled to study international relations and development.

"In Myanmar, they have a saying - if I only have one grain of corn I must share it with my brother. In spite of the little they have, they still must be generous. So I thought, well I can be generous too and use the privileges and skills and abilities that I've been blessed with to promote theirs."

"It took me a long time to work out what that was going to look like practically and what God was calling me to.... But the biggest thing that came through was that I was called to be their friend, to walk with them and pray for them and encourage them and do whatever I practically could."

Angela began organising fundraising projects and talking about Myanmar to anyone who would listen. Her church, St Columba in Botany, now coordinates the partnership with the Presbyterian

Church of Myanmar on behalf of the Church's Global Mission and raises money for projects through the Rice Bowl Fund.

Angela's role is to connect people in New Zealand with their brothers and sisters in Myanmar. She talks to individuals and congregations about the partnership and organises team trips. In 2011 there were four and another is planned for early 2012. The teams spend most of their time in the northwest of the country, encouraging women, visiting projects funded by the Church, or helping theological students with conversational English.

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

Angela says the relationship also benefits the Church by showing people how to be generous. "Everyone who goes to Myanmar is blessed and changed in some way or another."

Angela feels particularly passionate about Myanmar's children and young people and the healthcare and educational opportunities they lack. But she's seen significant changes taking place over the last five years and she feels hopeful about the future for her friends.

"I guess I just see myself as one piece of the puzzle. We all know the story of the Good Samaritan but God's called each of us to love our neighbour. It just so happens for me that my neighbour is in Myanmar."

For more information on the mission partnership in Myanmar or the Rice Bowl Fund, please contact Angela at myanmar@stcolumba.org.nz or see the Church's Global Mission webpage <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission/myanmar>

By Andrea Candy Spanz



Angela Norton and young friends in Myanmar.

Myanmar church leader encourages friendship and aid

When Myanmar's Rev Go Khan Suan visited New Zealand in December to speak to supporters of the partnership between the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand he had a powerful message to deliver, "Please encourage your people so this friendship can continue".

Go Suan, a key leader in the partnership, is a pastor from Zo Synod, in one of the poorest areas in Myanmar's northwest. He knows the extraordinary value of the aid and development projects supported by the Rice Bowl Fund and Aotearoa Development Cooperative, an independent microfinance organisation.

His own village of Khampat provides an excellent example. Sixty percent of its people are subsistence farmers who barely survive from one meal to the next. A team of water buffalo given to the Synod now work to benefit the whole village by helping provide enough rice for two families for a year.

Some of Zo Synod's pastors have also received motorbikes enabling them to visit remote villages.

All nine synods of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar have benefited in some way from the partnership with the New Zealand Presbyterian Church, says Go Suan. "The friendship is very important to all of us. If we received no help from you, I think survival would be much more difficult."

While in New Zealand, Go Suan had the opportunity to see the devastation caused by the Christchurch earthquakes, a visit that was particularly meaningful both for him and the Christchurch Presbytery. Earlier this year, in an act of extraordinary generosity, the Myanmar Church gave the Presbytery US\$1200 for earthquake relief.

Go Suan says conditions in Myanmar are now less restrictive than they were. In 2006, on his way to New Zealand to attend our General Assembly, Go Suan was checked 15 times by the military authorities during his three day journey to Yangon to register and state the purpose of his visit. This time, there were only two checks and the military presence was much less obvious in the city.

"The people are hoping for even greater freedoms", says Go Suan, "but in the meantime it's a case of wait and see".



The Rev Go Khan Suan, a pastor from the Zo Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

Go Suan emphasised that the friendship of New Zealanders is a great encouragement to the people of Myanmar.

"Without this Christian faith I dare not think about our lives. This Christianity makes us hope, strengthening us in the difficulties of life. It is because of the gospel of faith that we are accepted by our brothers and sisters in New Zealand. Because of this we stand firm on our faith."

By Andrea Candy Spanz

Whether it's an L.Th for potential ministry, or a paper or two for your personal interest and knowledge, we can fit serious part-time courses around *your* lifestyle.



Theology by Correspondence

ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

For further information contact the Academic Registrar
Phone 0800 667 969 | eidts@extra.co.nz | www.eidts.ac.nz



Study Theology from *your* home



Five year Vanuatu mission accomplished

Wairau Presbyterian Parish's special project with the people of Utas in Vanuatu came to an end this year with the completion of a five-year mission project.

When Wairau Presbyterian celebrated its 50th jubilee in 2007 it decided to embark on a special mission project in thanksgiving to God. After consultation with Global Mission, they agreed to help the people of Utas on the island of Ambrym, about 45 minutes flying time north of Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. Their goal was to send a mission team to help with building projects in Utas and to raise \$50,000 in the first year and \$5000 every year for five years to make this possible.

The first team of ten set off in April 2007 to replace the iron roof of the village church, which had deteriorated and was leaking. At the same time the team also repaired some minor damage to the timber underneath, fitted new guttering and fixed cracks in a large concrete water tank alongside the church.

The visit began a growing positive relationship with the people of the village which the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu helped facilitate by providing crucial communications and a link for shipping materials.

The following year the team included two Marlborough Girls' College students who built on the school's earlier relationships with the island's Senai School. This time, the Wairau team painted the church roof, replaced the back porch, repaired and connected a well to the church, and installed solar lighting in the church and ladies' house.

A year later the task was to build a water tower and tank to supply running water to the local hospital. Plumbing was repaired and new cabinets built. Everyone in the village shared in the painting and cleaning. The team also donated 40 sheets of roofing iron to another village so they could rebuild their church.

In 2010 a smaller team visited Vanuatu twice. The first trip was to discuss building a community centre and the second to get the work underway, a joint effort with many villages in South East Ambrym. The building was ready in time for the team's visit in 2011.



The Wairau Presbyterian Church 2011 team were honoured to be asked to make the casket for the late Jimmy Ansen, a leader in the Utas community, who died during their visit.

One of the high points of that trip was the celebration to mark the Community Centre's completion.

A key leader in the Utas community, retired national evangelist Jimmy Ansen, died suddenly during this visit. The Community Centre was named in honour of Mr Ansen and opened by his successor, pastor John Graham.

After the opening, the New Zealanders shared a feast with guests from communities throughout South East Ambrym and distributed clothes donated or sewn by church members back home.

Overall, last year's mission trip was "the best of all", according to team leader Neville Jones.

"It was a very emotional time for the team, but rewarding. We were honoured to be able to help with the burial arrangements for Jimmy Ansen and also privileged to be asked to make the casket. The funeral was a huge event and the team were humbled

by the high status they were given in the proceedings."

Saying goodbye after five years of working together was hard, Neville says. The team felt especially humbled and honoured to be able to pray for each other and for villagers who sought prayer for healing.

"Over the last few days we were able to sit, eat and share with the people of the village – something unheard of when we arrived back in 2007, but we had all changed and become friends and they accepted us as close family. They had special love for us all."

The Wairau church has received requests from two other villages in South East Ambrym, and from the Brian Memorial Church in Port Vila, to help with their projects. For more information about how your church can be involved in mission in Vanuatu, contact Global Missions coordinator, Pamela Tankersley pamela@presbyterian.org.nz

By Andrea Candy Spanz

Parishes take up global mission partnership challenge

When the Very Rev Pamela Tankersley took over the role of Global Mission coordinator in 2010 her key goal was to move the Presbyterian mindset toward mission partnerships. To Pamela's delight this has meant committed, and effective, advocacy for churches to take up global mission at the local parish level.

"Parish-based global mission means that local churches can experience the transformational power of being part of a global vision. The church is transformed by their engagement, as is the community with which they're involved.

"It's bigger than just sending missionaries overseas. Global mission isn't about something that happens 'over there'."

Many parishes have taken up the challenge. With the support of Global Mission they have become involved in long-term, sustaining mission relationships.

St Columba at Botany facilitates the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand's mission relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar. While Pamela provides support as needed, Angela Norton from St Columba is the key coordinator responsible for all the day-to-day aspects of the relationship including organising visits, volunteers for development projects, and funding.

Kids Connecting is another example of global outreach spearheaded by a local parish, this time by Otaki Waikanae Presbyterian. The initiative involves matching children from schools administered by the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu with a children's group in a Kids Friendly parish in New Zealand.

Pamela is grateful for the solid foundation laid by the Global Mission team in place prior to her appointment. "I appreciate the ground out of which I started working. From this base, we're developing the



The Very Rev Pamela Tankersley at the centenary celebrations of Christian Hospital Jagadhri, India.

Church's Global Mission programme in new ways."

During her tenure, which ends in August, Pamela has continued to build and maintain relationships that were cultivated by the previous team, with a focus on our neighbours in the Pacific and Asia.

Pamela says it is a testament to the strength of these relationships that following the most devastating of the Christchurch earthquakes the first messages we received were from partner churches "who saw us in our vulnerability".

Pamela was touched by their prayer, love and gifts. She was particularly moved by a generous contribution from the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar. Their offering was a truly significant sum given the average income of its members. Other partner churches including the Presbyterian Church of Korea also offered substantial gifts.

Pamela identifies partnership as one of the cornerstones of effective global mission. She commissioned a new logo to represent this visually and help strengthen the identity of the refocused programme. This new image is seen in this edition of Spanz.

"The emphasis in post-colonial mission is on respectful and empowering partnerships characterised by mutuality. It's about enduring relationships, and both parties being open to giving and receiving."

As well as enabling and supporting parishes to participate in global mission and matching parishes with opportunities, the Global Mission coordinator also has responsibility for maintaining the Church's international mission relationships with other churches and agencies. This often leads Pamela overseas. In October she and Ryhan Prasad represented Global Mission and the Friends of Jagadhri Trust (an organisation under the umbrella of the

Church) at the centenary celebrations of Christian Hospital Jagadhri in India.

"While we were there we took time to re-establish the partnership with the Church of North India. Experiencing first-hand the realities of our mission commitment helped us, working together with the Church of North India and the Jagadhri Mission, review the effectiveness of our Church's mission support there and plan the next phase of the partnership."

The relationship with Jagadhri is one of the Presbyterian Church's many enduring mission relationships. Expected among the priorities for Global Mission in 2012 are continuing work with the Uniting Church of Australia, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea, the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, and the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

The member churches of the Pacific region of the Council for World Mission will also be a focus for 2012, including support for diaspora communities, like the Kiribati Protestant Church many of whose members have migrated to New Zealand as a result of the impact of climate change, overpopulation and low employment in the island nations.

Pamela encourages parishes to become part of a project and experience the loving, and transformational relationships that come out of mission partnerships. "There's always room for more volunteers."

More information about Global Mission partnerships and development opportunities can be found on the Global Mission webpage <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission>

By Jose Reader Spanz

Christian World Service one year on

Twelve months ago Christian World Service lost access to its national office located in an area where people had been killed and injured by falling masonry. The temporary home we moved to was then classified as earthquake prone. One year on from the Christchurch earthquake we are at last settling into a new permanent home.

After the earthquake our staff were intimately and actively involved in rescue and recovery work including coordination of national and international aid efforts, applying the lessons we have learnt from our partners when responding to catastrophe overseas.

We witnessed the stunning revival of churches and congregations as they became central hubs of practical, emotional and spiritual help within Christchurch communities. Even where churches had lost their physical base they played a powerful role in holding traumatised communities together. The larger faith community transcended denominations, even in some cases faiths as, through service, it came into its own.

Local Presbyterian efforts were enhanced by practical contributions like food parcels from Wellington and money from the wider Presbyterian communion.

Food for Life

The other inspiring thing we saw in the aftermath of disaster was the way people came together to ensure the city did not hunger. We believe our renewed mission is to share that concern for others in the wider world. Coincidentally, CWS will be focussing over the next twelve months on the "Food for Life" campaign.

Food prices have risen significantly, an issue for many New Zealanders. Rising prices in developing countries have hit poor people very hard. A United Nations project monitoring costs in six countries found some staple foods rose between 50 percent and 100 percent in 2009.

In the year ending July 2011 food prices increased 33 percent according to the World Bank, pushing more than 100 million people into poverty. It is estimated that 70 percent of those who are hungry live in rural areas. Small scale farmers are finding it harder to eke out a living because of rising costs and poor market access.

International groups like the Food and Agriculture Organisation point to the lack of investment in agriculture, currently less than 5 percent of Official Development Assistance, as one factor. Investing in small scale sustainable agriculture and ensuring better market access, especially for women, is one path that will help people out of poverty.

Sri Lanka and MONLAR

Hunger was a daily visitor for poor people in rural Sri Lanka but new agricultural practices have kept it at bay and opened up new opportunities.

When Subhramanyam (Soo-bra-mani-am) stopped spending money on expensive chemical fertilisers, and used new techniques learned from CWS partner, MONLAR, he found he could feed his family well and save money. Gardening with compost and natural

pesticides has improved food production and the family's health. This has enabled them to make plans for a sustainable future.

MONLAR has also been doing a lot of work on organic rice production and the use of indigenous seed in rice farming. The green revolution in the 60s successfully ground down the local rice production as farmers became unable to afford the cost of seed annually in addition to fertilizers to grow this seed. By returning to traditional farming techniques and indigenous seed, rice production can increase and local small farmers will be able to compete in a market presently flooded with imported rice from India and Indonesia. MONLAR provides a prophetic voice to the farming community and also to the government of Sri Lanka on these issues.

CWS Funding

Over the last year we have also become more reliant on our supporters than we have been for a long time. Changes to government funding criteria and priorities mean we now receive only limited government support. While we continue to apply for government subsidies wherever possible, we have had to become a totally donor based organisation once again. This is a hard reality and has meant we have had to cut staffing and other costs to the bone.

When we asked major supporters for extra help last year the response was both generous and humbling. As economic and climatic changes impact on the world's most vulnerable people, our work in helping marginal communities become self-sufficient is perhaps more vital than ever.

Pauline McKay, National Director of Christian World Service



By making organic insecticide, using new techniques learned from CWS partner MONLAR, farmers in Sri Lanka have stopped spending money on expensive chemical fertilisers.

We are for people, not for profit

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



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

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

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

Free Phone 0508 86 4357

www.ps.org.nz



Presbyterian Support

Become a Guardian Angel today

When home no longer feels safe
for a child like Sophie

have you ever wanted to help?
Now you can.



Sophie stays very quiet when Mum and Dad are fighting, or home won't be a safe place for her tonight, or tomorrow.

As a Family Works Guardian Angel your gift of a dollar a day helps a family like Sophie's receive the lasting help they desperately need from Presbyterian Support.



☒ **YES, I would like to become a Family Works Guardian Angel today.**

Please complete the coupon and return it to: Presbyterian Support, PO Box 99890, Newmarket, Auckland 1149.

☐ **YES, I would like to become a Family Works Guardian Angel today with a regular monthly donation of \$30.**

OR

(Processed monthly on the 20th until further notice)

☐ I would like to give an urgent one-off donation of: ☐ \$40 ☐ \$60 ☐ \$120 ☐ Other \$

Your Details: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms:

Address: Postcode:

Phone: Email: Mobile:

Payment options:

I would like to pay by credit card.

Credit Card No. ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐ 

Name on Card:

Signature: Expiry Date:

OR ☐ Enclosed is my cheque payable to Family Works.

☐ Please tick if you don't want to receive information from Presbyterian Support

GASPO211

Call 0800 20 50 80 to become a Family Works Guardian Angel and help children like Sophie today.
www.angel.org.nz