



NEWS, ARTICLES AND STORIES
FROM
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This newsletter is a print version of the latest articles published on the Baptist NZ website and app. The app now replaces the *Baptist* magazine and is available to download on Google play and App Store. For those in the Baptist family who prefer to read hardcopy, check out what God is doing in our faith communities in this newsletter, sent bimonthly to churches. If you have email and would like this document to be emailed to you, sign up to our newsletter at baptist.nz

Podcast shows:

Our podcasts are a pre-recorded audio form of Baptist stories and other content, often involving an interview. We have some podcast shows available to listen to on our website:

baptist.nz

Each show has several episodes. Our **Baptist People** podcast show begins with an episode where Charles Hewlett (Baptist National Leader) interviews Sarah, co-founder of The Loyal Workshop. This business brings freedom to women in the red-light district of Kolkata.



Do you have any stories of gospel renewal in your community?

You can share them by emailing stories@baptist.org.nz

Feedback

If you would like to give feedback on this newsletter, write to our Communications Director at the Baptist Support Centre: P O Box 12 149, Penrose, Auckland 1642, New Zealand.



STEVEN GOULSTONE

Sunday church service turns into free bike fix-up

At Wellington South Baptist Church we've been imagining new ways to engage with our local community, to share something of God's amazing reconciling vision for the world. On Sunday 31 July, we partnered with a local charity, EkeRua/ReBicycle, a charity "which 'upcycles' donated second-hand bikes into safe, practical commuter bikes to gift or loan to people who need them, starting with newly settled refugees in Wellington."

Together we hosted a 'Free Bike Fix Up/Repair/Swap' event. After a shorter 'normal' service on the Sunday morning, we transitioned into a space of welcome for whoever was going to attend, including the bike workshop, a morning tea spread, and a place for kids to hang out while their (or their parent's) bikes were getting fixed up!

Despite a stronger than typical Wellington gale, we had a great turn out and had at least 12 bikes donated, 14 bikes tuned up, and 8 people received a free bike! This was all thanks to 15 EkeRua/ReBicycle volunteers and the amazing community of Wellington South Baptist Church.

We don't know how God will use the space we created together, but are excited about the opportunity to connect with our neighbourhood in an area of shared passion.

I'd love to hear what other churches are doing!

J. MERRITT JOHNSTON

We care about racial justice and violence in Ukraine and Myanmar

Three New Zealand representatives attended the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) 2022 Annual Gathering on July 16, this year held in Birmingham, Alabama, USA. Baptist leaders from around the world met for this strategic gathering to pray, learn, and plan together. Our representatives were:

- Ravi Musuku, President of the Baptist Churches of New Zealand
- Matt Renata, Chair of Te Kapa Rautaki
- Rachel Renata



During this annual gathering, the BWA General Council approved four resolutions focused on racial justice and violence in Ukraine and Myanmar. New Zealand Baptists are part of the Baptist World Alliance. Below are the details articulated and affirmed through our global connection within the 'tribe' of Baptist Christians. Provided by the BWA Director of Comms and Media:

Ukraine

The first resolution condemned the "unprovoked and unjustified invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine by Russia" and called upon the "European union, G7, and other intergovernmental entities to redouble their efforts to support Ukraine." It also included commendation for the "humanitarian and spiritual resources of the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, and the Baptist unions and other Christian groups in neighbouring countries for their generous hospitality, humanitarian aid, and spiritual help for refugees, supported by the European Baptist Federation, the BWA Forum on Aid and Development (BFAD), and the generosity of the global Baptist family."

Earlier in the week, attendees heard a report from BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown outlining the outpouring of support in response to the crisis in Ukraine. Over \$4 million USD has been raised, which has enabled 1 million displaced Ukrainians to be served by the BWA Baptist family. Global Baptist leaders have also engaged in peace advocacy through the United Nations as well as strategic meetings with Presidents, Prime Ministers, Members of Parliament, and other key leaders since the invasion. During the General Council, Igor Bandura – a Vice President of the Ukrainian union – shared that it is "a time of struggle, but our hope is in God. As Christians, we take our part. We continue to minister to our nation. We continue to bring the message of reconciliation and hope."

Myanmar

Vernette Myint Myint San, President of Asia Baptist Women's Union, also shared about the struggles of her homeland of Myanmar. Violence has continued to escalate since the military coup in February 2021, leading to suffering she witnessed first-hand while serving along the Thai-Myanmar border earlier this month. Council members responded with a moving time of prayer for the two leaders as well as the people of Ukraine and Myanmar. A second resolution in response to the violence in Myanmar condemned the coup, called for the "establishment of a true democracy that respects the rights of religious and ethnic minorities," and assured

prayer and support for Baptists and other people of goodwill helping in persecuted communities and among displaced persons.

The BWA also focused on restorative racial justice and slavery reparations. The resolution vote carried, which was met by applause throughout the auditorium.

"I want to say something about this moment," said Karl Johnson, BWA First Vice President. "I learned from Lee Spitzer [BWA Historian] that this body has passed some 60 resolutions dealing with racism and racial justice in the past, but not one has ever been passed on the subject of reparations. Today is a historic day in the life of the Alliance."

GRAEME WOODFIELD

Blood is life

We celebrate with Graeme Woodfield, a member of Orakei Baptist Church, for being recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours this year. Graeme became a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) for his service to transfusion medicine. His work included helping progress blood services and education in developing countries across Asia and the Middle East. The CNZM citation emphasises the valuable contribution of "his expertise in rare blood groups". In this article, Graeme talks about his life-changing work and the opportunities God opened up for him.



Blood is essential for all of us. We depend on it for life, and when we are ill, it can provide answers to treatment. The availability of donated blood is crucial when serious illnesses occur. In New Zealand, we have first-class blood service, but that is certainly not the case in many less fortunate countries.

One of my favourite hymns is "Blessed Assurance", which sums up much of my theology. From a young age, I had been aware that God had a unique role for me to play in life, but I had no idea what this would be. I struggled through my undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications, spent 3 years working in the blood transfusion service in Edinburgh, and then moved to Libya for 2 years to set up a blood transfusion service. This was followed by 5 years in Papua New Guinea developing its blood services.

It was time to come home, and the way was opened up for me to take on the position of Medical Director of the Auckland Regional Blood Services. I held this role for 22 years before being appointed Associate Professor

in Molecular Medicine and Pathology at the Auckland medical school.

I realised that my background and knowledge were quite unique as few others had such a wide range of transfusion experience in both developed and developing countries. I received many invitations from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other international and national organisations to teach and advise on transfusion in countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, Taiwan, Iran, and numerous others. Developing a safe, well-run blood transfusion service is essential for modern health services. It facilitates all aspects of medicine and surgery and saves lives.

I had found my role in life, and I continually thank God for his direction at all stages of my career. A special blessing was the opportunity to work in developing the blood transfusion services of the Ludhiana and Vellore Christian Hospitals in India. I visited India 20 times, lecturing and running workshops and enjoyed every moment of these visits.

In Auckland, we joined in the fellowship of several Baptist Churches, including Murrays Bay, Long Bay, Kumeu, and Orakei. A special role I developed over 10 years was being Chairman of the Auckland Baptist City Mission with Rev Murray Beck as Missioner. For almost 30 years, I ran the organisation “Medical Aid Abroad”, which made available medical items to developing countries, particularly in the Pacific Region.

God has been very good to me, and I have learnt to have great patience in finding his will. But at this stage of my life, I can only give thanks for the roles He has planned for me. I could not have done it without my wife, Annabell, who has been all that a wife can be. We celebrate 60 years of marriage this year!

BEULAH WOOD

Heart and housing in Whangārei

In a fresh-thinking move led by Baptists, some social housing in Whangārei serves a dual purpose.

A small but growing trust has found a way to support disadvantaged people there and at the same time support ethical charities overseas. It lets homes to people who are lowest on the application list, at a fair market rent (based on tenancy.govt.nz recommended values), while ensuring an income is generated that allows support for overseas community development.

The small charity is Tambourine Trust which lets three dwellings (with three more in the pipeline) to ‘high risk’ low income families and also sends funds annually to three trusts in India and Cambodia.

You may rightly ask, ‘How is this possible?’ There are several steps. Let’s first meet a tenant. Maia (not her real name), mother of four, had to keep on moving to other people’s homes for six and a half years, while waiting for a state house or rental, but her poor credit rating undermined all applications. The reason: she had bought on hire purchase with a finance company a used car that then broke down. She had no way to pay for repairs, and the car became their home. The result: she was repeatedly declined for all house applications, and

shifted on from occasional emergency housing. Rental agents forgot her, continually. She searched and waited. Till someone gave her number to Pip Rea who took her to PropertyScouts and a four-bedroom home and the mention of Tambourine Trust.



As Maia tells it, “My heart skipped two beats. ...If not for [COVID-19] Level 3 social distancing rules I would’ve jumped on her hugging and screaming tears of joy!!! To have two agencies...actually look at me as a mother, as a human and not a name on a paper and not ask for references and proof was overwhelmingly refreshing... I don’t know how long I could’ve kept myself going but thanks to Tambourine and Whangārei PropertyScouts we are settled enough that I’m working again and the kids are in stable schooling and we couldn’t be happier. Thank you so much!!”

CHARIS FOTHERINGHAM

OP Shop Encounter

The Doubtless Bay Christian Centre’s Op Shop Encounter project is fully operational after a four-year journey that began with prayer.



Doubtless Bay Christian Centre (DBCC) has long engaged with their community by running an op shop in a back room of their church building. This shop attracted enough visitors and contributors for its diverse range of finds to overflow out of the room. While the success of the op shop paid the wages of the youth pastor, it also invaded the kids’ church—time for the op shop to have a building of its own. So the leadership team began praying for a building, and because God can do anything, why not ask for a free building? God also grants whatever we ask in his name according to his will, so a free building DBCC got. The building was a 300m2 disused bowling clubhouse found in Kawakawa. It cost to transport the

building to the DBCC site, for which the Baptist Foundation provided a \$25,000 grant.

Four years on, DBCC, with the help of dedicated volunteers, have transformed a graffiti-covered, run-down bowling clubhouse into a top-notch op shop named Op Shop Encounter. Here the community can come and encounter the love of God.



Before



After

Jennifer Leggatt, an elder at DBCC, shares the success of this project in the Northern Baptist Association Newsletter:

We were so blessed by your funding support for the project, and for the advice, visits, labour and encouragement provided by Stephen Parker (Baptist Foundation).

NBA's help was invaluable and the Op Shop is now blessing us and our community in ways beyond that which we could have envisaged before we began. Thank you so much for your contributions to the project.

Many hours of voluntary labour went into the project and we are grateful to everyone who helped us over the four year journey!

We have attached some photos for your interest and encourage you to visit sometime when you are passing if you haven't already done so.

The opening hours are Fridays 9.00am to 3.00pm and Saturdays from 9.00am to 1.00pm.

JENNY LEE

5 things parents want you to know in order to help their neurodiverse kids

This article first appeared in the Baptist Children and Families eConnect.

Jenny Lee is a professional educator with 20 + years' experience; mainly working with reluctant learners and special needs students. Jenny loves serving the people of

her Rotorua community in a number of different roles, including Rotorua Baptist's Kids Church.

As a parent and teacher focusing on neurodiverse⁽¹⁾ children, I hear stories all the time from parents who long to give their children the opportunity to be part of a faith-based group, to build relationships with other adults and peers, to feel that they are known, valued and appreciated. The Church should be that place where we accept people for how God made them!

Below are five suggestions of simple things we can do to prepare for, and welcome, these tamariki.

1. Chat with parents

We know our kids best, what works and what to avoid. Some parents have a "passport"⁽²⁾ for their child, giving three or four statements that describe their personality, communication methods and behavioural patterns. Just because you've taught one neurodiverse child, don't assume that it will work for another! Dr Stephen Shore says: "If you've met one individual with autism, you've met one individual with autism."⁽³⁾

Also recognise that it might take some time for tamariki to warm up to your programme. It's likely they will prefer just to sit and observe from a safe distance. This is when they are getting used to the routine and how you do things. Maybe have a "busy bag" full of some activities or fidget toys that kids can play with while they are transitioning from being with Mum and Dad, to being in your care. Another strategy is to have a space in the room or nearby where kids can draw aside from the noise and chill.

2. Neurodiverse Kids Think Visually

It is just the way their brain works. So if you can, use visuals in your programme, they will engage and remember content better. You can use less words (which is also helpful), but using visuals helps to mitigate barriers from their learning.

3. Overstimulation

Overstimulation can be a big issue for some kids due to sensory input like sight, sound, smell; from flashing fairy lights, microphones, kids shouting, the smell of popcorn, and taste (resulting from a very limited diet). One child loved the colour red and spent the lesson staring at the teacher's bright red lipstick. It is a catch 22 situation in trying to make your environment interesting and attractive for children. However, the strings of flashing lights and very busy visual walls can make it hard to concentrate for neurodiverse tamariki.

Again, we parents will often let you know what is a trigger for our kids and have suggestions to help, such as: noise cancelling headphones, weighted lap or shoulder wraps, playing with a fidget toy to having a movement break or brain break - sitting away from the action just quietly reading, doing a puzzle or playing on a device. *Photo: Rotorua Baptist Kids Church in Morning Service. Supplied by Jenny Lee.*

4. Relationship is key

Please have someone from within your team that will take the time to build a relationship with the child (and us, the parents). They can be the go-to "safe" person who understands the child, their strengths and their

triggers. Sometimes I use the analogy of being in a foreign country i.e. you might need a translator to help you understand the culture, the people and the language, so that life isn't too overwhelming.

5. Don't take things too personally

Sometimes neurodiverse tamariki make inappropriate comments. They struggle with social understanding and it is amplified when in a group. We laughed last week, when one of the pre-teens asked a leader he hadn't seen for a while if she was pregnant? She laughed and said no. He then followed up with "you're just fat then!" He had a picture in his head (visual!) from the last time he saw her and it didn't match up with the way she looked that day. He was simply and innocently trying to work it out.



Photo: Rotorua Baptist Kids Church in Morning Service. Supplied by Jenny Lee.

[1] Neurodiverse: recognising that there are different way of thinking within the population e.g. ADHD, ASD, dyslexia, Tourette's and that it is embraced as diversity. Just like people can have blond hair, red hair or even no hair.
[2] Mells K. Tips for Autism Course Workbook. 2017. p. 128.
[3] Shore S. Leading perspectives on disability: A Q&A with Dr. Stephen Shore. [internet]. Lime; n.d. [cited 2022 May 20]. Available from: https://www.limeconnect.com/opportunities_news/detail/leading-perspectives-on-disability-a-qa-with-dr-stephen-shore

GRACE ELLIS

How two sponsored children met, fell in love and moved to New Zealand

Adapted from first publication in Tearfund's Correspondent magazine.

Danny and Joyce are part of Eastgate Christian Centre, a Baptist church in east Auckland. They both grew up in different parts of the Philippines and were sponsor children.

Joyce's story

"Growing up, I didn't know what soap was or what brushing your teeth looked like, or what it was like to eat three meals a day", says Joyce Paculaba. She grew up in extreme poverty until the age of seven, in Manila, Philippines.

"My father was a security guard but he died when I was just two years old. He was the victim of a shootout", says Joyce.

Her mother was put into a mental institution, so from a very young age, she was fostered.

"I moved from one aunt to another, staying with whoever would take me".

She eventually found "home" when she went to live with her mother's eldest sister. She was married to a



pastor who was the Compassion Project Director at the time.

"My uncle and aunty, four cousins and I lived in a house at the back of the church. All of my cousins were younger. I played games with them and taught them how to play chess and shoot hoops. They took me in as their own—I had finally found a family that loved and cared for me."

When Joyce was seven, her aunty and uncle enrolled her in the local Compassion Programme, not long after a student decided to sponsor her.

"My first sponsor got a cleaning job, just so she could afford to pay for my sponsorship. That gave me the motivation to study harder at school."

Through her sponsorship, she received a uniform, school supplies and books. She was also able to eat three times a day.

Growing up Joyce had no idea what a birthday was – it was such a foreign concept to her.

"My favourite memory as a sponsored child was getting these beautiful birthday clothes and toys and seeing a cake for the first time! This was a massive deal to me. I also now had security and a sense of direction through my sponsorship."

"When I went to Sunday school at the Compassion Centre, I came to know the Lord as my saviour. That's when everything changed."

Her last sponsors were an older couple. "Their grandkids drew pictures and sent them to me, and they said they were praying for me. It is beyond words the impact that had on me as a child. They had never met me, but they loved me as if I was a part of their family."

They sponsored Joyce until she was able to finish her Bachelor of Business Administration.

"After I graduated, I wanted to minister to other children and bless my sponsors, so I volunteered at a Compassion Centre. I would help translate letters from Filipino to English, help facilitate programmes as an emcee, organise summer camps, teach in Sunday school and organise a Kid's Praise Musical."

Danny's story

"I grew up receiving the benefits of my sister Miriam's sponsorship. I was born in Cebu, Phillipines, about 800km away from Manilla. It was a busy neighbourhood, we didn't have a lot, but we were happy," says Danny.

Danny lived with his two parents and his three siblings. His mother was the project director of the local Compassion Centre at the time.

His younger sister Miriam was sponsored through Compassion from primary school right up until high school. Her sponsor also helped her go on to study physical therapy at university.

“When you sponsor a child you sponsor a whole family,” says Danny.

After Miriam studied physical therapy for two years she got into a freak accident.

“She was sadly hit by a vehicle, it was a very hard time for the family. After the accident, her sponsor still



wanted to help, so he decided to move her sponsorship onto me.”

“At 18-years-old I was one of the eldest enrolled with the Compassion Programme. Sponsorship gave me school materials, a uniform, food, school supplies, birthday clothes and meant I could go to a good doctor. Sponsorship also allowed me to grow up with happy memories and have a fulfilling childhood,” says Danny.

From a tragic turn of events, came something beautiful.

“I wanted to study hard and make the most out of the sponsorship after my sister died. Because of her sponsor, I was able to complete a computer engineering degree.”

“I am so grateful to God for the way he always came through for me and took care of me,” says Danny.

When Joyce’s and Danny’s path collided

In 2005, Danny and Joyce met at a Compassion Alumni homecoming.

“I liked Danny’s sense of humour. He was shy, but when he spoke he made me laugh. We became good friends,” says Joyce.

Later that year Danny had to move to Singapore for a job as a liaison officer in a construction project.

“We had a long-distance friendship for seven years, and in the eighth year, when I went to visit Danny, he asked me to be his girlfriend. The following year we were married, if neither of us were sponsored we would have never met,” says Joyce.

After another three years of long-distance marriage, Joyce and Danny decided to settle in New Zealand together.

“Joyce works for Auckland Transport as a transport controls administrator and I work in construction,” says Danny.

A few months ago Tearfund came to Joyce’s and Danny’s church (Eastgate Christian Centre) and spoke about sponsorship.

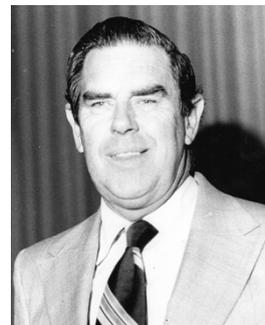
“Danny and I decided to take a leap of faith and sponsor little 7-year-old Kefi from Indonesia. We hope to

be as much of a blessing to Kefi, as our sponsors were to us,” says Joyce.

IAN WRIGHT

Mentored in pastoral prayer: Roland Browning

Invercargill Central Baptist Church pastor Keith Harrington asked me to write a brief testimony of serving with my Baptist pastor Roland Browning in Invercargill in my late teens. This was around 1972/73.



I joined the Invercargill Central Baptist Church following an epiphany of sorts in a Youth for Christ camp meeting with evangelist Muri Thompson. I first met Roland & Rita Browning and their family as I started to be involved with youth meetings and street outreach in the city.

I was a bit of a smart aleck with the elders and pastor, and was teasing ‘Rolly’, as we called Mr Browning, one day, suggesting that his job as a pastor would be a breeze as he only worked one day a week! I remember well as he stuck his finger in my face, and challenged me to work with him for two weeks to see what pastoral care was really like.

I only had two weeks holiday a year at my job, so took them to meet Rolly’s challenge. I was still living at home and having a holiday sleep-in when my mother woke me on my first Monday ‘off’, and said that “Mr Browning was on the phone”. I eventually went to phone and heard him say to me in very short terms, “Where are you?” “Having my day off Mr Browning” “Get around to the manse immediately”, he replied, and promptly hung up.

Golly I thought, these Baptists are a bit feisty. However I started my two week stint following my pastor around in everything he did. What happened that week is another story, but the call on my own life was well and truly alive following those 14 days.

As I recently shared with pastor Keith Harrington, the one thing that still stands out to this day, was being mentored in pastoral prayer by pastor Browning. We would kneel at the start of each day (at that point I’d never knelt in my life), and take one fifth of the address list for our church, and starting at the A’s would work our way through the people from Monday to Friday praying for every man, woman and child on that list.

This wasn’t a ‘members list’ this was Rolly’s list. My pastor was a Pastor/Evangelist and a hero to so many of our youth, young adults, waifs and strays and members. If I learned anything that fortnight it was about fighting on my knees and valuing people.

Ian Wright is a Senior Leader at Invercargill Christian Centre.

DAVE TIMS

Change-makers

This article is reproduced with permission from UNOH Finding Life Newsletter.



Urban neighbours of hope (UNOH) is an international missional order who in New Zealand are affiliated with NZBMS as ORBIT. Their workers' mission is to immerse themselves "in the life of neighbourhoods facing urban poverty, joining the risen Jesus to seek transformation from the bottom up". Dave Tims, Director of UNOH New Zealand, shares how change begins in our relationships with the people around us...

From the book *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed*, the authors state:

"We are living at a point in history when the need and desire for change is profound. Our current trajectory is no longer sustainable. We cannot ignore the compelling environmental and social challenges that vex today's world because they will undermine us all. We cannot dismiss the fractures in our own communities, or the fissures between those of us fortunate to live in comfort and the massive number of our fellow human beings who live under the crush of poverty around the world. It is a pivotal time. We need to be change-makers – and very capable ones at that".[1]

Becoming 'change-makers' is one of the essential and profound grassroots tasks of UNOH. Acceptance of the status quo is not an option. We dream of seeing the church and our neighbours become key players in re-imagining how we can organise our lives. Lives that reflect a radical lifestyle like that of the early church in Acts, where disciples determined to live simply and willingly share their lives with the poor. Jim Reiher says, "the principle behind the story of Acts 2:41-47 and 4:32-37 ...is that we radically look after those in need, even if it costs us personally".[2] The pursuit of wealth loses its spark when we live close to the poor.

COVID-19 forced us to rethink our priorities and revealed the importance of connection and relationships. We had to learn to adapt to the 'new normal' and change how we lived in our neighbourhood.

Time passed and we adapted to the upheaval of our regular daily activities (work, social, recreational and cultural) and developed new routines as our 'bubble' negotiated working from home. We were in touch with our friends [and neighbours] to share coping strategies, set up contact lists [and Facebook pages], and checked on

our older relatives and friends to ensure they would be able to access essential supplies during 'lockdown'." [3]

The experience of COVID-19 reinforced UNOH's deep value of staying connected to the grassroots, working with neighbours for transformational change, through the living Jesus, from the bottom up. A recent working partnership with the Ministry of Health found us labelled as 'hyper-local'. We refused to take our successful model of neighbourhood engagement into another neighbourhood that was 'unknown' to us. The term 'hyper-local' relates to those who focus on matters concerning a small community or geographical area.[4] Our approach is not a project that can be 'copied, uplifted and then imported' into a new neighbourhood. The key to our success is relationships with each other. This approach takes years of work, leadership development and the concept of citizenship – 'being responsible for our own neighbourhood well-being'. This model can't be 'cookie-cut' and reproduced without the foundation of 'neighbourhood building'.

We constantly face the challenge of change and are learning to be flexible, people-focused, rather than project-focused. This process requires us to adapt to who people are and what they bring. It does not allow projects to dictate what we can and can't do. We are not brilliant at this, but we try. Our park contract, which involves picking up rubbish from all our parks and changing rubbish bags, would usually be given to someone with a driver's license. However, no one was available to do this job except Franco, who wanted more work hours. We were able to think creatively and provided a mountain bike with a trailer attached so he could ride to all of our parks to complete the work. Franco got more work hours, and we fulfilled our contract – problem solved. Another project involved creatively working with Manurewa Local Board (City Council) on plans to increase the tree coverage in our neighbourhood and city.

Change can also be painful. It's hard saying goodbye to neighbours who have been central to many expressions of community love over the years. We have shared laughter, tears, heartache and dreams many times together. However, as one season finishes, we find ourselves standing by a new door with a choice – do we open and walk through, or do we stay? The door may offer the possibilities of a new season, with new friendships and a new journey. We walk "backwards into the future" through that door. "Ka mua, ka muri" is a Māori proverb that expresses the idea that we look to the past to inform the future.

[1] Frances Westley, Michael Quinn Patton, and Brenda Zimmerman, *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007).

[2] Jim Reiher, *The Book of Acts: A Social Justice Devotional Commentary*, 2014, 32.

[3] Munford, "Reflections from Aotearoa New Zealand."

[4] "Word on the Street," January 2022, <http://unoh.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Word-on-the-Street-2022.pdf>.

PHIL HALSTEAD

Reconnecting as church: Timeless strategies and bowling a beamer

Phil Halstead is lecturer in pastoral care at Carey Baptist College. This article is reproduced with permission from carey.ac.nz.

Some questions feel larger than others. A few weeks ago, I was invited to respond to the following behemoth: “How should churches journey with folks who are hurting due to the covid pandemic as they begin to gather again?”

...Dallas Willard asserts that the “overarching biblical command is to love, and the first act of love is always the giving of attention.”[1] Designated caregivers can assist the injured as they return to church by listening to their stories and pain. They could also systematically contact persons who haven’t returned to church and ask to meet up and listen to their stories. We need to start where people are at. To be heard is to be loved. It’s not difficult to envisage the good that could flow from these actions. However, where listening and attention do not bring about healing, caregivers may assist folks to grieve their losses, explore the concept of forgiveness, and/or accept what can’t be changed. Clearly, these kinds of processes don’t take place over night.

Similarly, churchgoers with a pastoral bent may assist the injured in their midst to work towards peace and reconciliation in their fractured relationships. This might entail facilitating safe forums where hurting parishioners can share their opinions and listen to other people’s perspectives. The purpose of these exchanges is not to win an argument, but rather to give wounded individuals an opportunity to voice their thoughts, broaden their horizons, develop empathy, and experience healing and connections. In this process, congregants will sometimes discover that beneath their differences is common ground. For example, many pro- and anti-vaccination persons have taken their stands due to their genuine concern for people’s health and safety. Connections can be built after listening to one another and on foundations of good intent.

Churches can also promote healing and nourishing relations by providing parishioners with opportunities to serve together. Labouring shoulder to shoulder with (even estranged) others in the pursuit of a greater goal can be remarkably therapeutic and connecting. It can also extend the kingdom of God.

Preachers have a vitally important role to play in supporting and growing strategies of this ilk. For instance, they can enhance associations amongst parishioners by expounding on the fact that each one of us comprises part of Christ’s body (1 Cor. 1:27) and we’re all created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Preachers can also promote healing by pointing people to Jesus’ example of managing acute hurt and pain. Jesus achieved this by giving God his feelings (i.e., his sorrow), his desires (“Take the cup, if it is possible”), and his trust (“If it’s not possible for this cup to be taken from me, may your will be done”) (Mt. 26: 36-46).[2] Jesus

and the scriptures truly are limitless treasure troves that preachers can draw from.

To stimulate my thinking further, I confronted five close friends who had gathered for a social meal with the question that was put to me a few weeks ago: “How should the church assist people who have been hurt through the covid pandemic as they return to their houses of worship?” Without so much as the blinking of an eye, my friends declared: “Leaders must lead. They daren’t let congregants, denominational heads, or the government dictate to them what ought to be done.” “Truth must be stated. We mustn’t sweep what’s happened under the carpet. There’s no possibility of reconnection without truth.” “God is doing a new thing. We’ve got to learn what that is and get onboard with God.” “The Bible ought to be preached. The last thing we need is more TED talks masquerading as sermons.” And twenty minutes after the deluge had dried up, one person added between mouthfuls, “Whoever came up with that question has heard God’s heart. It’s a great question.”

One way of interpreting my friends’ impassioned retorts is to recognise that God is doing something new. Crises give rise to opportunities and oftentimes can be interpreted as wakeup calls. To revert exclusively to the status quo after all we’ve been through—especially if we can’t say with total conviction that God has told us to do so—would be a tragedy. We also need to understand that pressures from virtually every quarter will try to pull us back to what we were doing pre-covid.

This raises important questions: “What is God doing (or wanting to do) in your, in my, faith community?” “What have we learned in these past few years?” “What should we be putting in place before the next crisis hits?” “What relationships should we invest into while we have time?”

Since our contexts are different, I think we all need to pause and seek God for guidance, clarity, and courage. I think we all are obliged to pore over the scriptures with people from our own churches to learn what God is saying. Prophets’ messages need to be heeded. Prayer and dare I say it, fasting, should be our bread and butter in such a time as this. Many of us need to awaken, go deeper, prioritise God’s word and words, declutter, become less worldly, reorientate, and become more focused. If we were to do this, we would serve the hurting who are returning to church and many more besides.

[1] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 210.

[2] Adapted from John Mark Comer’s remarkable sermon on Gethsemane.

BEULAH WOOD

Bubbling with new opportunities

Ross and Cindy Meyer, in New Zealand until August, can hardly get over the excitement of new openings available for Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh.

Cindy says she is ‘Bubbling with excitement at the new possibilities—both because of seeing God at work

and the surprising reality of people now actually wanting the educational input they can give.’

Ross and Cindy first went to Bangladesh 33 years ago. They did the classic missionary tasks of ministry in a new church, discipling, teaching, guiding village pastors and young people. For 20 years they had the unusual experience of working with a mission team who were mostly Chinese and serving under the New Zealand Baptist Mission Society (NZBMS). This was an unexpected method yet they formed a close knit team that ranged in size from 10-32 people, all involved in meeting and helping new believers.

Then 16 years ago Cindy initiated an English-medium school at the request of a local church, Golgotha Church, part of the Bangladesh Baptist Christian Fellowship (BBCF). Bangladesh was stuck in old-style methods and rote learning and even trained teachers needed coaching and modelling to see another way of educating.



The new school that started in Dhaka in the church lobby and then grew into two floors built above the church building, became GEMS (Golgotha English Medium School) and was highly successful in modelling new ways of teaching. Cindy and Ross, called their Kiwi-style best practice methods REAL LEARNING FOR REAL LIFE. It was a huge task, re-training teachers willing to change to methods different from their experience or training, setting up a fee-paying school, and all the administration as needed. But the school soon paid for itself. That was win-win.

Then 11 years ago in the long-established New Zealand Baptist Mission city of Chandpur on the huge distributary of the Brahmaputra/Meghna River, the government district administration asked Ross and Cindy to start a school on their behalf. This was powerful. In that city the mission was already known and respected, and now government officials wanted more. They offered an old jail building and the school began a successful partnership of government and mission that even included the development of a Special Needs unit, a rare thing in Bangladesh.

All this was full of strains for Cindy and Ross, even if they were good strains. They had to travel weekly between the two centres (a five to six-hour journey by river ferry or by vehicle), develop curriculum and suitable educational systems where most teachers in the Dhaka school were Christian, those in Chandpur Muslim. Ross, still running a mission society with his largely Asian colleagues, is also a trained engineer. His help with

administration and government relations stretched to turning the jail into a beautiful school.

The opportunity was too good to miss but it sure was demanding, right into the COVID-19 era. Fortunately, by 2020 Cindy had handed over GEMS school to local leadership, and due to other circumstances, they have felt wise to step back from the Chandpur school.

It could have looked discouraging, but immediately new opportunities presented. They never thought it possible, yet they now have four potential opportunities growing from what Bangladeshi people saw in the trend-setting initial schools.

First, the other four BBCF schools, set up in Bengali medium by previous missionaries in Chandpur, Brahmanbaria, Mymensingh and Faridpur were struggling. Traditional in style, 60 to 120 years old, and now with the impact of COVID-19, they were falling in numbers and losing fees. These have asked Cindy and Ross to re-envision, to train teachers and become their valued consultants in teacher training (Cindy) and computer training (Ross).

Second, BBCF has 13 school hostels where mainly tribal children of new believers stay in district towns and attend government schools. They want seminars with parents and coaching of students, including computer help.

Third, Best Foundation, led by two retired Bengali Government secretaries, plus a man from England with Ross and Cindy, wants to offer consultancy to improve education, again through teacher training for best practice and computers. This was another surprise. Ross had got to know the two government men through visiting their offices so often trying to get visas and clearances for themselves and colleagues. Now that has had an additional purpose.

Fourth, the possibility of helping the tea garden schools in the tea plantations.

No wonder Ross grins and Cindy bubbles with excitement. They’ll cheerfully head back.

But: Oh, the need for more helpers from New Zealand. They ache to use the opportunities but can’t do it alone.

Please God, send more New Zealand Baptists.

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CHARLES HEWLETT AND JONNY WEIR

“I want to be like Jesus. And Jesus gave his life for the church”



Charles Hewlett (our National Leader) believes that robust leadership of Baptist faith communities is absolutely crucial if we are to bring gospel renewal to people and places in our local neighbourhoods.

In a recent Zoom conversation Charles reflected with Jonny Weir about how robust leaders are formed. Jonny is the Director of Ministry Training at Carey Baptist College – he oversees our college’s pastoral leadership training, how we as a movement of faith communities invest in future leaders.

Jonny commented:

“Building, growing and demonstrating are three words that are important to me and we spend all of our time focused around them: Building your identity in Christ, and as an individual. Growing in competence – we need pastoral leaders that just know how to do the work of ministry. And finally demonstration – what does the demonstration of your convictions and practice look like out on the front lines?”

Charles asked Jonny about the joys of pastoral leadership and whether it was worth giving your life for. Jonny responded by quoting Acts 20:28 and commented: “Ha, I want to be like Jesus. And Jesus gave his life for the church.”

You can watch their full conversation on the baptist.nz website.

Charles states:

“I really love being part of the Baptist family of churches in New Zealand. I’m excited about the future and the role we have in helping bring gospel renewal to both people and places. Pastoral Leadership is worth giving your life to! Contact Jonny today and begin your journey.”

You can email: jonny.weir@carey.ac.nz

CHRIS CHAMBERLAIN

Assembly Council update and call for nominations

Chris Chamberlain is the chair of our Assembly Council as well as Senior Minister at Oxford Terrace Baptist Church in Christchurch. This regular update comes after the recent 2-day Assembly Council gathering.

Your Assembly Council acts as a kind of ‘committee’ of our annual Assembly in between our gatherings,

known as the Hui each November. We are eight members (four elected annually for two years), joined by the President of the Baptist Union of New Zealand, Vice-President, NZBMS Mission Council chair, Baptist National Leader and their Assistant, and the Baptist Support Centre Finance and Operations Director. We can co-opt additional members; currently, several Te Kapa Rautaki members also join us.



The photo above is from our most recent two day retreat held in Auckland (10-11 August), where we had a slightly extended period to focus on ‘big picture’ matters:

How to make progress on expressing Te Tiriti ō Waitangi related co-governance has been a recent big picture topic. So too, learning together about governance- a constant risk is that we will fall into micro-management when in fact we have a brilliant National support centre staff team doing the hard work already. Related to this we have been working on a Charter – a set of guidelines for the Assembly Council that has been an overdue resource for us. We have also recently formed an Audit Finance and Risk Committee that reports to the Assembly Council. More on this committee will be announced soon. Some people will be aware of a major property and finance risk the movement has been forced to deal with after a recent church closure that left us all dealing with poor historic property decisions. We need to do better in these areas, and this new committee will help us in this way.

Some of this might sound tedious but in truth we have spirited conversations! We love serving the movement, engaging with the National Leader in vision-related discussion, and working to bring greater strength to our background structures.

We often press ‘pause’ and pray for you (our 250 faith communities and team of 40,000 Baptists).

We often ask questions of “how a Baptist way of doing Church?” would deal with the topic at hand.

We need a wide range of big picture skills in the room! Treaty partners, commerce, ecclesiology, law, property, pastoral, governance- these are the sorts of experienced people that really need to be in the mix in order for the Assembly Council to run well, and to serve our movement of churches well.



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