

# Rongopai

WORKING TOGETHER TO TAKE THE GOOD NEWS BACK TO NEW ZEALAND

Rongopai is the newsletter of the Christian Community Churches of New Zealand Trust. Autumn 2018



**CCCNZ**  
Together Works Better

**Financial support for Rongopai:** Rongopai seeks to encourage you with what God is doing in and through our churches and support ministries, across New Zealand. To see Rongopai continue to grow and flourish, would you consider providing a financial gift towards helping CCCNZ continue to publish it? If you want to know more, please email [office@cccnz.nz](mailto:office@cccnz.nz), or deposit funds to: CCCNZ: 02-0719-0220311-000. THANKS!

## *Christianity is an outward looking faith*



We love because God first loved us. God sought us while we were still sinners and poured out his love and grace for us through his son Jesus.

History is packed full of ways the great and glorious gospel of Jesus has motivated Christians to make a difference in the world around them: efforts to end slavery, to champion the education of women and children, to fight for justice and equality, to provide health care to those without means...

...but we still find it hard to reach out to the communities we live in. We still struggle to meet our neighbours; to form relationships with people we pass on the street every day. We often sense the enormity of people's deep spiritual and physical needs while also despairing at our own inadequacy.

### **Is your faith locked away?**

We live in a world that is growing increasingly cold towards Christianity—at least towards the type of faith we see locked away inside a church building, the type of faith that only speaks up when it has a moral issue to shout about.

The Bible warns us about this disconnected faith, a belief that is all lip-service and no action. James writes bluntly about it: *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."* (James 2:17)

Dead. Not dying, or sick, but DEAD.

### **Radical Mercy**

Jesus teaches a radical compassion and outward love when he shares the picture of the Good Samaritan. To those listening to this parable, the idea of a Samaritan being 'good' was unimaginable; yet we see a picture of someone going to extreme lengths to help someone in need. The Samaritan not only tends to the injured traveller's immediate needs, he also provides funding for the injured man to be well cared for until he has recovered completely—he goes over and above what is expected to show compassion and mercy.

Caring for someone in need did not stop the Good Samaritan from his life and business, in fact it happened in the *midst* of it. The invitation at the heart of the story is to lavishly and practically love the needy in the street, community, school, or workplace right where you are.

Jesus not only modelled this sort of love for us in his life, death, and resurrection, but he commands the hearer of his parable to 'Go and do likewise'. Go, and embrace a life of radical love and compassion poured out on those around you.

### **Looking Outward**

This extravagant mercy should underpin our interactions and ground our faith in deeds. James refuses to separate faith and deeds, and he speaks to a culture where it is all too easy to cling to faith while neglecting the heart of mercy Jesus taught and modelled.

Looking outward isn't optional for Christians, but that doesn't mean it isn't hard. True compassion is often uncomfortable, true connection can leave us vulnerable and exposed. It is a costly sacrifice.

Yet, the Scriptures continue to point us to serve others in times of need; to care for widows and orphans (James 1:27), to do good to all people (Galatians 6:10), to live such good lives among the world that our deeds might commend the gospel of Jesus to those around us (1 Peter 2:12).

This latest magazine is a collection of stories from churches like yours. We're profiling the way ordinary Christians are building relationships and getting involved in Kiwi communities—and

the sometimes surprising results.

At the end of each interview are the contact details of the pastors we spoke to. We've included these so that you can start your own conversations with them and find your own way to make a loving difference outside the walls of your church.

We hope you'll join us in learning from these stories, and that they'll challenge and inspire you to step out into your local community.

Radical mercy is not just empty action—it's love with dirty hands and muddy feet, it's love that points people to a God of extravagant grace and deep compassion.

## *As the Father sends me, so I am sending you.*

### LIFE CHURCH MANUREWA

Pastor Lui Ponifasio



As pastor of Life Church Manurewa, Lui Ponifasio has clear understanding of the church's role in the world: we do as Jesus did. *"It's the incarnational model of Christianity. When Father expressed His heart to the world, He didn't just say 'I love you.' He demonstrated it by sending Jesus. It was love you could see and touch and feel."*

For Lui and his people, the next bit is the kicker: ***"As the Father sends me, I send you."***

*"Everything flow from that. As Christ's followers, we are called to show love and the gospel. We cannot just talk about it. But there's also a balance: we can't just be into social justice: we must proclaim the gospel as well. You have to have both."*

*"As leaders, our job is to empower God's people to live loving, truth-telling lives. Yes, they are rooted in their faith and rooted in the church. But the fruits of that faith must show in the community. We have a saying: 'No one is attracted to roots. People are attracted to fruits.' We are deeply committed to that truth."*

For the last 12 years, the believers at Life Church Manurewa have been actively living it out. But how did they get like this? How did this church-wide 'loving-the-community' start?

Lui recalls the journey.

*"Loving the community must be on the heart of the leader, to*

*the point of modelling love for the community for others to see.*

*Vision is also important. When it comes to loving the community, define the WHY more than the WHAT. It's more important that believers know why they should love their neighbourhood more than knowing what form that love should take. Share the vision with passion. Share it with your leaders and keep talking about it with the groups."*

When Life Church relocated to Manurewa in 2007, there were already many churches in the community. The question Lui asked was **'How can we do church differently?'** *"I said to my people, let's go out into the community, prayer-walking the streets and listening to God. As we pray, we will see the community from God's perspective. Look for clues about the community's needs. You'll learn about them from their houses and their lawns. If we are to love these people, we'll need to know them."*

One obvious sign of need was the broken bottles strewn everywhere. Lui and his people quickly realised that their community had a problem with alcohol. But what does a church do about that?

*"We started with something practical within our reach. For us, that meant gathering as a church every Saturday morning at 7am to go out and clean up the streets. We picked glass and rubbish from skate parks and footpaths. Everywhere we found it."*

*"When the community people saw what we were doing, they asked us about it – why were we cleaning up someone else's mess?"*

*We then saw an opportunity to get the community working alongside us. We spoke to primary schools and organised for the kids to tell their parents 'On Saturday, we're going to have a big clean up. Join us.' And they did. We had God's people and the community working shoulder-to-shoulder."*

To better understand, Lui paid a visit to the local Community Liaison Officer. *“I said to him: ‘I don’t know anything about the community. Can you help me connect?’ He gave a list of all the key people: school principals, Kaumātua, police officers, the president of the Business Association, the mall manager. I went and visited them all (with chocolate cake!).*

*“To love your community, you have to make that kind of effort. The fish won’t jump out of the sea onto your lap while you’re on the sand. You have to fish on their terms. If we do, the rewards are great. From that list and those meetings, dozens of opportunities opened up for me and my people.”*

Like befriending the Manurewa police force.



In 2008, a series of incidents put the police under pressure. A liquor store owner was killed on a Sunday. A taxi driver was robbed on Monday. A dairy owner was held up with a machete on Wednesday. As a result, the full force of media scrutiny and blame was levelled against the police. ‘Useless’ was how the community described them.

Lui took a completely different approach.

*“On Sunday, I got up to preach and said: ‘God calls us to be different. These police officers are real people. They have families of their own, yet they are risking their lives. This coming Wednesday, we are marching down to the Police station. It will, look like a protest, but we’ll bring food and support.*

*“For my part, I brought certificates of appreciation for each officer. We got the young people to make signs that read ‘Manurewa police. You are our heroes’ and ‘We love Manurewa Police.’ When we knocked on their gates, the police were expecting the worst. But we showed them nothing but love and support.”*

Some of the officers were in tears. *“The Area Commander came up to me and said, ‘I have been a police officer for 30 years. This is the first time I have felt appreciated.’ Another told me that he was about to resign because of the pressure, but our show of support had changed his mind.”*

Two years later, Lui was invited to be the official chaplain of the Manurewa police force.

Over the years, Life Church Manurewa has reached into their community in all manner of practical ways. They led the schools and wider community into a Working Bee called PAINT OUT. The aim was to eliminate every trace of graffiti from Manurewa in a single day. With the support of the Manukau Beautification Trust, they accomplished their goal.

They’ve also instigated the closure of numerous liquor outlets in Manurewa. To get the ball rolling, Lui took it upon himself to take photos of every liquor outlet in Manurewa. He then took these photos to local leaders and politicians, along with submissions for an investigation. A formal study was carried out which officially recognised the disproportionate number of liquor outlets for Manurewa’s population.

*“This local support helped give our church the mandate to protest when new liquor shops opened. When a new outlet was proposed, our people rallied around the site and protested to have the development shut down. We often succeeded.”*

Lui’s people also partnered with Countdown to distribute soon-to-be-expired bread to local people. Some came to believe in Christ as a result. Others learned that the one place you could go in times of trouble was Life Church.

From the relationship Lui had developed with the mall manager, Life Church was able to partner with two other churches to set up a drop-in centre within the actual mall. HOUSE OF HOPE became a place where locals would come to hang out, drink coffee, and share about the issues of life. Lui recalls one special encounter. *“After coming along to our House Of Hope, a particular woman started coming to our church on Sunday. She then gave her heart to God and died four weeks later.*

*“As leaders, we sometime think ‘How can I get bums on seats on Sunday?’ It’s okay to want that, but we’ve got to love the people who are not coming to church. We have to go to them, as Jesus came to us. It’s not a programme; it’s a way of life.”*

**As the Father sends me, so I am sending you.**



# *With so much to do, it can be overwhelming. Often, this is what stops us. But I say, just start!*

## CHURCH ON VOGEL

Andrew and Sonja Mitchell



In 2013, Andrew and Sonja Mitchell moved churches in Palmerston North to take up a pastoral position at Church on Vogel. Their vision was to mobilise the church into a culture of reaching out to their community. Nothing unusual about that. Plenty of leaders want the same thing.

Where Andrew and Sonja depart from most pastors is the direct approach they took to building bridges with the community. The account Andrew gives is profoundly simple.

*“Two blocks down the road from the church is Roslyn School. Sonja and I decided the best way to get involved with them was to have an upfront conversation with the principal.”*

*“I simply asked if we could sponsor four kids to attend the upcoming Christian Kids Camp. I kept nothing hidden and was clear that the camp was overtly Christian. The school jumped at it!”*

After consulting with teachers, the principal chose four children. Each child was from a challenging background, and three of the four were on medication. The school contacted the parents and explained the Vogel Street offer. All the families agreed to meet the Mitchells.

*“If you’re going to reach out to people in the community, everything has to be relational. Face-to-face is the best way to build connections. So Sonja and I arranged to have coffee at the homes of these families.”*

*“When you’re in front of someone, they can see who you really are; you can build trust. We said to the parents: ‘This is who we are and this is what we’re doing.’ Even though we really wanted to bring some love and joy to their kids, we made it easy for the parents to say ‘no.’”*

They all said YES.

Andrew felt the camp was a brilliant experience for the children. *“They were difficult kids and hard to manage. We knew they would be. But they had an absolute blast! They’re not used to such a positive, loving environment. They drank it in.”*

When word of the camp’s success got back to the school, the Mitchells felt the need to have another chat with the principal.



This time, they came with a door-opening question:

*“We simply asked her, ‘What can our church do to help your school?’ We let the school dictate the terms of our relationship with them.”*

The principal felt there was a lack of parental involvement with many of the children. That showed in a lack of reading time and one-to-one talking with an adult. *“We offered to put together a reading team that would come in and read books with whatever kids were given to us. The team was initially Sonja, myself, our daughter (doing the 1st year Pathways internship), and a couple of older women from our church.”*

*“It went so well. When we went in, we’d each take a child for 15 minutes or so and read. We’d also encourage the kids to read to us. Then we’d talk. It’s so important for young people to have adult conversation.”*

That team of five or six people now numbers 15 plus and together they cover junior to lower-middle school. The first year we did this we had only one Pathways intern. This year we have ten. Three of the interns are also on board to help tutor year 7 and 8 maths.

When it comes to Vogel Street’s connection with their community, two things are clear. First, the Mitchells are leading by example; they’ve been committed to building community connections from the time they arrived. But how have they gotten the church involved? How have they ensured that it’s not merely pastor-driven?

Andrew explains. *“As a pastor, you have to know from the outset that this must be a church thing. Sonja and I could make an initial splash, but it has to go beyond that; the whole church needs to be involved.”*

*“When people arrive at Church on Vogel it is our job to sell the*

vision of this community involvement. When new people arrive we listen to their story. Then we ask what they're passionate about and get a feel for how they can contribute.



*"Sometimes it means seeing where they could fit in to what we're already doing. At other times, it means joining them up with other likeminded people and supporting a new initiative they are passionate about and gifted for.*

*"For example, we had four young couples arrive at Church on Vogel during a six-month period. There was a common thread with these four ladies: they all wanted to connect with younger girls. One of them had already been involved in the past with Girls' Rally. She was keen to get something going, so we connected her with the other three ladies.*

*"Within a short period, these four gifted young woman had organised a Girls' Rally which we were able to promote in the school. It started with 12 girls and has grown to 22 girls in only 18 months. Many of these girls are from the local community with no Christian background.*

*"As pastors our job is to support this ministry wherever they need help. They form just one part of the big vision but each of these parts is essential to the whole. Our job is to encourage and resource them. We're not doing the work. We're helping people join the dots."*

At times, that means Andrew's and Sonja's involvement is heavy at the start. Even if that's the case, Andrew's intention is always to pull back and leave the people to it.

*"Recently, Sonja and I took over the leadership of the youth group to help infuse the community vision. This age group is a key part of the overall strategy to connect church and community. I simply want to light a fire. We are working*

*primarily with the young adult leaders. They need to carry the vision for the youth group. We feel that if they can catch the vision, they will be the ones to sell it to the youth.*

*"It's starting to work. Our youth leaders are becoming intentional at picking up and bringing community kids to the youth group and to church on Sunday mornings."*

Everything's connected; the youth group, Sunday mornings, the Girls' Rally, playgroup, the work in the school. It all feeds the vision.

For many church leaders wanting to connect with their community, the hardest part is knowing where to start. One key thing Andrew did was join a Roslyn-focused community group. That immediately put him in touch with the local librarian, Police, city councillors and others wanting to impact the community.

*"When you're in these community groups, you get a feel for the opportunities. You hear things. From the librarian, we learned about an 8-year-old boy who was causing trouble in the library. It was becoming a big issue; even police resources were being taken up. When we offered our church's help, the librarian said 'That would be great.'*

*"We asked the librarian to speak to the mother of the troubled boy. If she was happy for us to make contact, get her to give her details. The mother did. We made a phone call and organised to have coffee with her.*

*"We started with very small steps: 'What if we get a few of our young adults to meet with the boy at your home, after school?' After confidence was established, we then got permission for these young adults to take the boy down to the park for some fun. Then the siblings opted in. Then neighbourhood kids joined in!"*

In spite of the success that Church on Vogel have found, it begs the question: How do you help community people enter God's Kingdom? How do you transition beyond simply being for community people?

*"Genuine love is the key. If people know they are genuinely cared for and loved, the God conversations happen. But a lot of work has to be done inside the church. Believers have to see how big God is, and how amazing the Gospel is. A lot of churches have lost their passion for what Christ has done. Without a genuine love for God and gratitude for what Christ has done, you can't expect to reach your community.*

*"I'm not a big programme person. We do them, but the heart of community involvement has to be relational. It's about doing life with people.*

*"At Church on Vogel, we've got a long way to go, but we are underway. There is so much to do that sometimes it can be*

quite overwhelming. Sometimes this is what stops people from starting. It seems too big. I say just start.

*“But it has to be undergirded by prayer. The importance of prayer is a growing reality for us. Psalm 127:1 echoes in my heart all the time: ‘Unless the Lord builds the house those who build it labour in vain.’”*

For churches wanting to grow God’s Kingdom in their community, there is an inevitable cost. *“The cost of getting into the community is high, individually and collectively. You can’t*

*pursue the secular dream of comfort and advancement AND reach the community. Something has to give because loving others takes time and resources.*

*“In the end, it comes down to deciding what really matters in the long run, and by ‘long-run’, I mean in eternity. Is my career that important? Or my house, or car? Is Christ important to me? If he is, then I need to live for him which means laying myself down in some way.”*

Maybe for someone in the community.

## What kind of community would be a sign against the prevailing consumer ideology?

### CHAPEL HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pastor Philip Renner

When I asked Philip Renner the opening question – What is your church doing to connect with community people? – I think I expected him to talk about the Chapel Hill Kindergarten that his church created in 2003.



It’s a substantial kindy, with a Christian-based curriculum delivered by mostly Christian teachers, and has been filled with community kids since the year it opened. Philip does mention the kindy, but not in the flagship way you’d expect.

*“We’re in the middle of a transition. For a long time, we’ve seen Christianity as a product that we can package. When people talk about our kindergarten, they see it as something that delivers Christian-based content to non-churched community people.*

*“But mostly, that’s a draw for believers. Non-churched people aren’t coming for Jesus. They want their kids to be good*

*members of society, so they take what they want from our Christian product and leave the rest. Fair enough.*

*“We still have Kindy, Play Group, Mainly Music...and we’ll continue to run these programmes. But rarely does any of it transition to Kingdom transformations.”*

The **“we’re in transition”** bit seems key. What are the Chapel Hill believers leaving behind and what are they heading into?

*“There are a number of reasons why many Christian ministries don’t lead community people into knowing Jesus. One of them is that we, the followers of Christ, share the same fundamental worldview of the non-believers: the primacy of the individual.*

*“For believers and non-believers alike, life is about self-fulfilment; it’s about pursuing things that add value to my life. Houses. Careers. The education of our children. Leisure. Pleasure. Even ‘purposeful activity’ is a life-enhancing thing.*

*“Now think about the gathered church. Often, it is individuals lightly connecting with individuals, most hoping to find church rewarding in some way. And that’s the problem: we see church as a building that houses life-enhancing products. Naturally, we assess the value of church based on these unspoken questions: Is this helping me? Do I have a sound-bite that I can take away? Am I ‘feeling’ it?”*

*“We assess church in this way because our prevailing view is self-help and self-determination. Not only is this worldview damaging for believers, it leads to the type of ‘community’ where the unchurched can’t really be expected to find Christ. It isn’t worth coming for.*

*“I suspect that in conscious and unconscious ways, we’re trying to make ourselves like the world we’re in. Israel did that under Samuel. ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations...’ That never works.”*

If 'Church as Product' and 'self-determination' is what needs to be left behind, where are the believers of Chapel Hill trying to head?

*"At Chapel Hill, we're trying to challenge these worldviews and the resulting behaviours. We have to because those worldviews are the drivers behind our impoverished experience of community. If we can create and enjoy genuine community, we'll have a lived-out reality into which we can invite the unchurched people we already rub shoulders with."*

How do you get these deep ideas into the hearts and minds of God's culturally conditioned people?

*"Creating a new culture is a slow dripping tap. It's small things done often enough to 'saturate the ground' with new ideas and new behaviours. For example, we started with something that families already do: Friday night dinner and a movie."*

*"We began inviting our people to bring food to share and to enjoy a movie with the gathered church. It's what they'd do anyway, but on a bigger scale. The point of this small move is to create a gathering where there is no agenda other than spending time with each other. If you can do that, you have a chance to know and enjoy someone in a way you weren't doing on Sunday."*

*"We also invite our people to meet up and practically serve one another. When we decorated the church for Christmas, we invited everyone to join in. When the church is used to doing life and serving others, it's naturally engaging with others, and naturally welcoming."*

*"Also, I am deeply convinced that the account of the early church pooling their possessions in Acts 2 and 4 describes God's fundamental priorities for his community. When MY STUFF becomes OUR STUFF among believers, a profound freedom is experienced. You learn that the community has your back and that God has your back. That kind of love is real freedom, and we need it."*

*"Like non-churched people, we're too anxious of losing our place in this world. Our priority becomes our children's education, in the hope they will move up a couple more rungs of the middle-class ladder. We live with subconscious fears about careers and house prices and whether or not we are advancing. It's all self-referencing."*

*"I'm convinced 'community' will protect us from these fears."*

Philip believes that trusting God is another key.

*"God says 'With me behind you, you can afford to be generous. You don't have to be afraid that you won't have enough, or that someone will get ahead of you if you give things away.' We rate parenting on giving our kids better stuff. What about 'I just want my kids to be faithful'? Generosity and trust is forcing us to ask harder questions. Questions like 'Lord, where do you want me to live? Where do you want my kids to go to school? Can we trust God enough to hand these things over to Him?'"*

*The difficulty for us is we're trying to embrace something we can hardly describe. We're struggling to describe this community because we've rarely seen it or experienced it. That's where I think we have much to learn from Māori: lessons from the marae and from their experience of Whanau."*

Philip recounts an experience of how his sense of the community had a profound influence on a seemingly individual decision. *"When you think about buying a car, it's all based on self-referencing factors. What do I want? What suits me? What meets my needs? When my church generously offered to buy my family a vehicle, that all changed. Because of their generosity, I was suddenly community-conscious when it came to car choices. Buying became a community-conscious activity."*

*"Sure, I asked 'What does my family need?' But I also asked 'What vehicle will benefit the church? Or those who might want to use it? What vehicle will be less of a burden to the community?' Rather than limiting my options, I found this more difficult process to be deeply enriching and liberating."*

Philip cites another question that the people of Chapel Hill have to answer: How do we take our slow-growing community revolution into the world around us?

*"One small thing we did was to invite the wider community around our church to join us in a fundraising Spring Market. The fundraiser was for our 24/7 Youth work, a ministry where Chapel Hill partners with a local school to help young people in their struggles."*

*"Community people understood the need straight away and showed up in large numbers. Yes, they were there to buy or sell, but they also knew they were contributing to a bigger community cause and that changed the environment. For one guy it was his first time ever on a church premises – a church member who knew him was shocked to see him! And for that one Saturday, we felt in genuine community with our neighbours, and we could tell they felt the same way."*

*"Ultimately, we're asking this question: What kind of community is needed in Rototuna? What would be a prophetic sign against the prevailing consumer ideology? Whatever God is calling us to, it'll be outside our comfort zone. It has to be."*



# *“NZ’s problem isn’t poverty. The problem is you don’t know any people who are in need.”*

## ORWELL STREET CHURCH

Former Pastor Tony Dudley



By his own admission, Tony Dudley isn’t your typical Brethren pastor.

He plays rugby with Oamaru locals. He throws punches in the boxing charity Fight For Life. He feels comfortable having drinks

on Friday nights with the town’s freezing workers.

And he’s completely sold on the idea that the calling of the church isn’t to bring people into the church, but to take Jesus to the people.

*“I didn’t grow up in the Brethren Church, which gave me advantages when I became a Brethren pastor. I was able to ask the question ‘Why do we do what we do?’ My background enabled me to rethink the calling of the church, and evangelism, which had implications for leadership.*

*“It’s fair to say that my leadership and perspective caused a degree of discomfort for Orwell Street.”*

When it comes to the church’s calling, the key driver for Tony is the incarnation of God. *“God came into the world. That’s the most profound truth you could ever embrace. He came to us, in flesh and blood, through Jesus. God went out to the community and it makes complete sense for His people to follow His lead and do the same.*

*“In a way, we’ve got the whole thing back-to-front. Most churches use the ‘attraction’ model, where we try to make unbelievers come to us. But that isn’t the way of God. The way of God is to go to the people. And that isn’t merely a way of doing church. Going with Jesus to the community is a way of life.”*



For Tony, that way of life led him to the local freezing works.

*“The Oamaru Freezing Works used to have a work-place chaplain. But they eventually did away with that because, for them, it had zero credibility; they couldn’t relate to the chaplain.*

*“When I approached them and offered to take up the role, they were interested because they felt I was one of them. Or enough like them. I had played rugby in my younger days and when the workers found out about that (and I made sure they did), they invited me to join them. And I did.*

*“That, in itself, opened many doors into their lives. So did joining them for Friday night drinks. I was able to be one of them while also remaining true to myself.”*

Tony knew that some in his church felt uncomfortable. They wondered what he was doing and where he was leading them with this approach.

*“I’ll say it again. It’s not about bringing people to church; it’s about taking Jesus to the people. You have to earn the right to talk to them about faith and the issues of life. You earn that right by loving them. But to love them, you have to know them, and that means doing life with them, shoulder to shoulder.*



*“One Sunday morning, I got up to speak and said to the church: ‘We have a problem in New Zealand with poverty. But the problem isn’t poverty. The problem is that you don’t know any people who are in need.’*

*“Until you know someone in need, you can’t be compassionate. When you do know such a person, it changes your whole perspective.”*



Christians periodically hear stories of compassion from visiting missionaries who are working side-by-side with locals overseas. But as good as these accounts are, Tony believes it is vital that each of God's children become part of their own good story.

What role does leadership play in helping people 'get in'?

*"For a leader to be an agent of change, you need to take some people with you. Modelling is crucial. If a leader is going to call others to get involved with community, that leader has to be doing it themselves. That's what gives them credibility in the pulpit."*



*"But if you're going to move your people from the front, it's less about telling them what they need to know, and more about challenging them to do something specific. It's 'Here's what I want you to do.'"*

*"Some of the most relational things happened around the table. So I told my church: 'Here's your challenge: have someone around for a meal this week. Treat them as honoured guests. Don't preach. One rule: they can't be a Christian and it should be someone you've thought about having around."*

*"The following week we had so many stories. One guy had a Romanian family over for dinner. The Romanian guy couldn't believe the hospitality. While he was in the house, he saw the host's religious books, which started a whole series of conversations."*

*"We also challenged our youth to a bake-off. Then we told them to take their baking to the police, social workers, the fire service and ambulance people and say, 'Thank you for doing what you do.' These community people were moved by what the young people did, and all of them asked, 'What's this about?'"*

*"We've taken firewood to people and stacked it for them. We've approached the local supermarket and asked for permission to help take groceries to people's cars."*

Then Tony got into a fight.

*"Because I had a profile in this community, I got involved in Fight For Life. I have never trained so hard and I became known as the PUNCHING PREACHER. I put up a good fight on the night. I lost, but it helped deepen my connection with the community and helped them overcome some of their hang ups about Christianity and the church."*

*"It's all about going out to the people. Like God did."*

## *We simply approached the principal of each school and asked, 'How can we serve you?'*

MT WELLINGTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

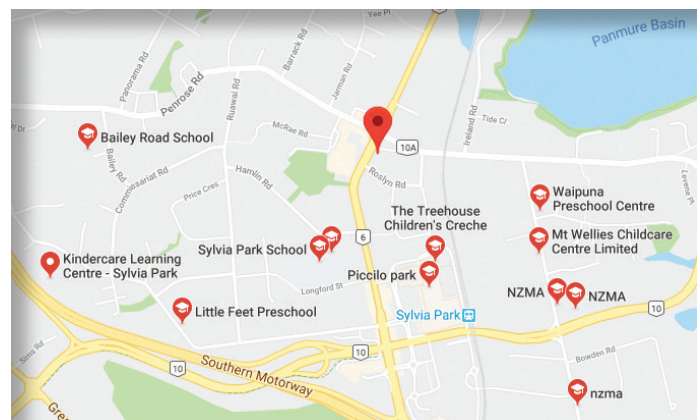
Pastor Russell Grainger



For 16 years, Russell Grainger's church has been doing life with the people in Mt Wellington. Russell has been there the whole time, and this is what they have discovered.

*"Sixteen years ago, we made the decision to work with the local schools around us. Three primary schools and two high schools are right on our doorstep. Rather than overthink the whole thing, we simply approached the principal of each school and asked, 'How can our church serve you?'"*

*"We discovered that (1) they were incredibly positive towards*



*us, and (2) they had lists of ideas that were longer than we could possibly fill! Mentoring was one thing we really went after. The schools often give us hopeless cases, kids for whom the road back to wholeness is going to be long."*

*“That’s the thing with serving community people. It’s a long-term thing with lots of hard yards to done. There isn’t any avoiding that. And sometimes, though not often, you become part of a work of God in someone’s life.”*

Someone like Max.

*“Max was one of the kids we mentored at school. Working with him was a tough journey, but eventually he started coming to our church. Long story short, Max stayed with us, got married, and is now one of the people who mentors kids in the school where we first met him.”*

If that sounds rewarding, Russell is quick to point out the other side of community involvement.

*“Yes, you see good things happen, and we’ll happily tell those stories. But you also spend hundreds of hours supporting people in their marriage and with their kids, and it goes nowhere. That happens a lot, but you don’t stop doing it. God calls us to love people.”*

For Tania, something certainly did come from her connection with Mt Wellington Community Church. Tania’s friend Rebecca was required to do community service, which happened to be at Russell’s church. As a result of Rebecca’s time there, she became a Christian.

Tania noticed changes in her friend and said, *“I want what you’ve got.”* To begin with, Tania’s journey towards Jesus started with Bible studies at the church. After some time, she also became a follower of Christ, like her friend.

As Russell explains, it wasn’t all plain sailing. *“When Tania became a Christian, we were obviously overjoyed. But her husband wasn’t. In fact, he threatened to leave her. With our church family’s support, Tania weathered that storm and her husband came around. Today, Tania is on our fulltime staff.”*

Mt Wellington Community Church has found other creative ways of building into the lives of community people. Large community events are always on the church’s calendar. In partnership with the Auckland Council, the church puts on Glow In The Park every Christmas.

*“Our church must have a community reputation because the Council actually came to us and asked if we would run a Christmas event. They even helped fund it. We also run The Light Party, which is our alternative celebration to Halloween. Every year we get over 1000 community people attending.”*

The church buildings are also being used for the community. One building houses the Op Shop.

*“Our Op Shop is very popular. Every week we get loads of people coming in, sometimes because they need to buy something, but many just come to talk. We have our regulars.”*

For a church to engage with community people, and for those



people to become part of the church, there are definite barriers that must be overcome. Russell has noticed one in particular.

*“When churches start up a service in the community, it’s often very giving and accepting. Christians who serve in these ministries are tremendously warm and open. But often, church on Sunday isn’t like these community outreaches. There’s a disconnect. So, if someone from the community does come along on a Sunday, they notice the abrupt difference. We have to fix that. We have to make the lost a priority, even in our services.”*

*“In our church, we preach on the lost a lot. There aren’t a lot of our people who are winning their neighbours to Christ, but they want to. As a leader, you can do something with that.”*

*“For starters, you can create a ‘permission-giving’ culture. By that, I mean you can give your people the clear sense that if you have a community-reaching idea, the leaders will support you; we’re open. Some years ago, we had one of our Home Groups come to us and say: ‘You say we want to reach the community. We want to do a Sunday Off Service, where instead of coming to the church building for singing and a sermon, we offer to do jobs in the community.’ Great idea. We ran with it.”*

*“Some others came and said, ‘We want to do a Drop-in Centre.’ As leaders, we were only too happy to help them make it happen. As best as we can, we try to empower God’s people to do God’s work.”*

In closing, Russell recalls a book that deeply impacted him some years ago.

*“Sheila Pritchard wrote a book called ‘Digging Wells or Building Fences?’ The basic idea was that in Africa, waterholes are where the animals gather because that’s where they get refreshed and find life. I understood immediately. Churches should be like wells, where thirsty people gather. “Our church has a well mentality, and I’m glad about that.”*



# EVERYDAY DISCIPLE MAKING

2018 Regional Conferences

**'GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES'**

We all know Jesus' command, but how do we go about it? How does the ordinary Christian 'make disciples'?

Regional Conferences are for anyone who follows Jesus and is keen to learn how to read the Bible with one or two others: mums, dads, grandparents, students, professionals, church leaders, volunteers, retirees...




**WHAT HAPPENS AT A REGIONAL CONFERENCE?**

Explore what investing the Bible into a few people in your life might look like and lead to. Come away with practical tips to apply what you've learnt in your unique context-- in the home, on the sports field, at the office or in your local cafe. Meet people from churches in your region, and enjoy time to pray and plan with your own church leaders/members.

**SPEAKERS**



**Daryl Bay** joined the Hope Community Church staff team in 2007 and plays a key role in teaching, preaching and discipleship. *Daryl will be speaking at our SOUTH ISLAND Regional Conferences.*



**Chris Thomas** serves as the Teaching Pastor of Raymond Terrace Community Church in the Hunter Valley of NSW, Australia. *Chris will be speaking at our NORTH ISLAND Regional Conferences.*

**COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU!**



**Southern**  
Sat 28 April, Alexandra Community House, Alexandra

**Waikato**  
Sat 26 May, Raleigh Street Christian Centre, Cambridge

**Canterbury**  
Fri 29--Sat 30 June, Rutland Street Church, CHCH

**Central & Lower NI**  
Sat 8 Sept, The Coast Community Church, Kāpiti

**Auckland**  
Sat 15 Sept, Northcross Church, Auckland

**COST**  
Price per person at each location is \$45.00 (includes lunch and all conference materials).



**REGISTER: WWW.CCCNZ.NZ**



Feel free to chat to CCCNZ Events Manager Delwyn Blondell  
E: delwynblondell@cccnz.nz  
PH: 021 063 6359



# YOUTH MINISTRY SUMMIT 2018

14 - 16 MAY // TOTARA SPRINGS, MATAMATA

**WHO'S IT FOR?**

The CCCNZ Youth Ministry Summit is for people passionate about working together to make youth ministries effective. If you're a youth pastor, or even a key youth leader, and love networking and exploring vision then this summit is for you.

We believe God desires to see strong, healthy youth ministries all over NZ and would love you to help make this a reality.

**AT THE SUMMIT YOU WILL:**



Tell us how CCCNZ can best serve you and your youth ministries.



Connect with other youth leaders and pastors from NZ.



Explore what makes a youth ministry healthy and sustainable.

**WHERE AND WHEN?**



START: Mon 14 May 2pm  
END: Wed 16 May 6pm



TOTARA SPRINGS  
MATAMATA



COST: \$165  
\$115 for those flying to Auckland or Hamilton Airport

**DON'T MISS OUT**



To register, contact CCCNZ Youth Enabler  
Murray Brown:  
murraybrown@cccnz.nz  
027 8415 321



Registrations close  
Sunday 6 May



Consider asking your church for financial help to come.

The Youth Ministry Summit is sponsored by CCCNZ and Pathways College of Bible and Mission  
www.cccnz.nz      www.pathways.ac.nz

# JOB VACANCIES

## *CCCNZ Prayer Coordinator*



Do you have a passion and calling for the ministry of prayer? Our Prayer Coordinator will be responsible for mobilising people to pray and creating a community of intercessors with a heart for the unreached.

This is a stipended role based on experience and suitability, 16 hours per week.  
For the full job description: [www.cccnz.nz/page/jobs](http://www.cccnz.nz/page/jobs)



## *CCCNZ Auckland Mission Enabler*



We're looking to fill the role of Auckland Mission Enabler—someone who is passionate about helping Aucklanders hear and understand the gospel through church planting and replenishing.

Hours: 3 days per week.

This paid position is a partnership between APA and CCCNZ.  
For more information: [www.cccnz.nz/page/jobs](http://www.cccnz.nz/page/jobs)

