

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Rongopai

NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY

LESSONS LEARNT IN A PANDEMIC

SUPPORTING LOCAL SCHOOLS

CREATIVE WAYS TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL CAMPS



VOLUME 15

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“Instead of focusing on providing fun and entertainment, we will focus more intentionally on running activities that develop deeper relationships.”



FIVE LESSONS I'VE LEARNT IN A PANDEMIC



MATT MEEK

YOUTH PASTOR AT RICcarton COMMUNITY CHURCH AND CANTERBURY YOUTH ENABLER

1: Relationally deep programmes are comparatively easy to adapt

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, youth ministry has—for many churches—been one part of church life that has suffered the least. Even when online hasn't been as good as the real thing those young people who have a deep relational connection to each other, and to those who disciple them, have remained connected.

The lesson learnt here is to invest even more heavily in developing deep relational connections among our young people and with their leaders. Instead of focusing on providing fun and entertainment, we will focus more intentionally on running activities that develop deeper relationships.

2: Focus on the *why* not the *what*

Our team has had a lot of conversations about *why* we do things the way we do over the past year.

COVID restrictions led us to meet in smaller groups in homes and we found these offer things that our larger meetings couldn't provide. It led to us involving more parents because we needed them to host or to provide transport. We found that many of these parents naturally started forming discipling relationships just because of their proximity to young people.

Sometimes, as we asked the *why* question, we had the uncomfortable realisation that we weren't really sure why we did some things in the first place. If activities weren't leading to relational connection and/or discipleship they got the cut and many of those things won't ever make a comeback.

Asking *why* means we focus intentionally on the things that really matter; it gives us a chance to repair the leaking vision—making us stronger than before.

3: People long to be contributors, not consumers!

I can be critical of the consumer nature of church, but through these last couple of years I've found that people really do long to contribute.

Those who were only consumers were first to leave our ministries and they will be the last to come back, but those who had a role to play have stayed committed.

In future, I am going to ask more of our young people because they will grow more if they are contributing. I'm going to ask more of our parents because having them engaged is gold on so many levels! I'm going to ask more of our elders because when they show up our team and our young people feel valued and important. And I'm going to ask less of myself because when I do tasks that someone else can do, I'm stifling my real role which is to equip the saints for acts of service.

4: Clear communication is hard to master, but vital!

The pandemic has taught me the importance of taking time to communicate regularly and well.

I'm aware that often schools, sports teams, and clubs are better at communicating with families than churches are. If I desire to see families equipped to live out their faith together, to see parents discipling their children and valuing the church's input into their family life, then I have an opportunity to communicate in a way that inspires, equips, and holds accountable these families to values that they desire but sometimes neglect to live out.

Over the past couple of years I've found that there are many parents whose deepest desire is to pass on their faith to their children, but they are often unsure how to do it well. I don't claim to be an expert, but I do get to spend some time thinking about it and if I can offer some helpful suggestions I can make a real difference.



Games at RCC Youth.

Photo credit: Riccarton Community Church

5: My time with God is what makes me a leader worth listening to

I have noticed the difference over the last couple of years between times when I have led out of my relationship with God, and times when I have tried to lead feeling dry. The vibrancy of my relationship with God is one of the key determinants of how my ministry will go.

Therefore, I've been learning to prioritise my time with God. To plan regular retreat days, to build prayer and silence into my work time, and to lead from a place of intimacy with God. I am blessed to be a blessing, but if I try to be a blessing without receiving first, I run out of anything good to offer pretty fast.

What opportunities are there?

I like change because it presents an opportunity. While 'opportunity' may not be the first word that comes to mind when we consider these past two years, it might be an important one for us to consider as we move forward.

Our ministry at Riccarton does not plan to return to 'normal' because we've learnt that normal wasn't achieving everything we wanted it to. We have learnt lessons over the past two years that are going to make us better, and we are committed to making sure we learn and apply the lessons for the sake of God's kingdom expressed through the lives of our young people, our families, our churches, and our communities.



Turning Point

TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE

Juggling the logistics of gathering restrictions was one of the most significant challenges for many churches in the past few years. While smaller churches were often able to manage changes with a degree of flexibility, the challenge for larger churches was more complex.

When lockdowns first hit in 2020, many large ministries pivoted to develop an online presence. As time wore on, the impact of no face-to-face interaction started to take a toll and new ideas and solutions emerged.

By the time the ‘Traffic Light’ COVID-19 Protection Framework was put in place late in 2021, many larger churches were exploring a range of options.

We spoke to four larger churches within the movement to discuss their experience of juggling gathering restrictions—what they learnt, what worked, and what has changed.

At Raleigh Street Christian Centre in Cambridge, adjusting to restrictions revealed the weaknesses and strengths of different-sized groupings, and the benefits of mixing things up.

Associate Pastor Nick Goodwin says the disruption of restrictions often led to new opportunities, “At Raleigh Street we have tried a number of different things over the past two years, sometimes because we were forced to, sometimes just because the disruption provided freedom to change.

“A new Sunday morning routine emerged, not as a direct response to the pandemic, but because we felt free to innovate and try something different following lockdowns. Previously we had one service of about 75

minutes, but we now keep that service slightly shorter, around 60 minutes, followed by morning tea, then a time of ‘electives’: a range of classes, seminars, missionary talks etc. that people can choose to attend (or they can stay in the café and chat).

“The smaller additional Sunday services running during the traffic light system have provided opportunities for participation from many who would not be comfortable contributing publicly in our usual large Sunday morning meetings. There has been opportunity to grow the experience and confidence of some of our people in new ways.

“Smaller meetings have also seemed to meet a need in the community for a different expression of church. We have seen people engage in these services who have not been so involved previously, including non-Christians. We will continue to run an afternoon service that will be small, more relaxed, and more participatory than has been typical for our Sunday morning services in the hope this helps widen the reach of the church.

“We’ve also focused on upping our game when it comes to community support and engagement. A new initiative, Te Mahi Whenua, has started which involves church groups giving practical assistance in the community, such as clearing up yards and tree-planting. There has also been a lot of effort going in to provide frozen meals for those self-isolating or sick: There is a freezer cabinet in the foyer from which church members can take meals to distribute, and regular cook-ups to replenish supplies”.

For Raleigh Street’s youth group, juggling restrictions has meant a change to the way the group now regularly meets, says Youth Pastor Aaron Hodgson:

“Adjusting to the traffic lights was big for us as a large group. Prior to lockdown we had over 100 youth gathering each week—this was a great outreach into the community, but when we couldn’t meet as a large group, we quickly realised we were lacking depth of relationships.

“Because we didn’t want to use vaccine passes for youth we chose to prioritise small group meetings in homes. Some were initially very resistant to this and didn’t even want to try. But it had amazing results in cultivating deep discipleship relationships and developing new leaders. It also helped break down friendship cliques.

“Even though we can return to ‘normal’ we’ve decided we’ll pursue a hybrid model. We meet one week in a large group setting, and the next week in a smaller group setting—giving us the best of both contexts”.

Embracing House Church Worship

Making the most of smaller gatherings was one way Hope Community Church in Nelson chose to embrace the opportunity for change provided by the pandemic, says Lead Pastor Daryl Bay:

“God has been really gracious to us over the past years of change, simmering tension, and fatigue. Early on, one elder appealed to us to embrace challenge as opportunity. It has been a case of back to the basics and cultivating the ground in which true life in Christ is grown. We’ve relearned the vitality of unity in Christ, how life-giving grace and patience can be, and how important it is to care, communicate, and listen well”.



A celebration at one of Hope Community Church’s House Church gatherings.



Experiencing the joy of having children and young people engaged in worship in a different way at Hope Community Church.

Hope Community Church experienced the joy of House Church worship, to the extent that they are building it into the rhythm of their monthly gathering plan, says Daryl:

“Rather than having one Sunday worship leader or communion leader, the House Church model has had dozens of worship leaders expressing their giftings each week. Little gatherings have contextualised their meetings, equipping children and teens to engage in worship, and allowing more personal and interactive times of communion”.

Hope Community Church’s passion is to grow more than just a crowd of disconnected people, “We long to cultivate a vibrant family of faith, sharing life and love in Christ, and on mission to bring hope to our community”.

The church re-gathered as one large church family for the first time at Teapot Valley Christian Camp at Easter, says Daryl, “We heard testimonies, the gospel was preached, Teapot Valley served us beautifully, and the church family relaxed late into the day on the wonderful campus”.

Growth Amid Restriction

While the time juggling very limited gathering restrictions was difficult, the change in church rhythms has produced some encouraging areas of growth for Te Awamutu Bible Chapel, says elder and Lead Pastor Bradd Trebilco.

“One of the highlights of the past season was the unity we experienced as a church and eldership in navigating

gathering restrictions and vaccine passes. As an eldership, we felt convicted early on in the process that we wouldn't use vaccine passes in our services. As we were finalising the decisions around the practical management of gatherings, we stopped and asked the church to join us in praying and fasting. In doing so the congregation was actively behind us as we were making this decision. Doing this as a whole church together has been one of the highlights of the whole COVID experience. There has been a great sense of unity and expressed love for one another.

"Reaching this clarity early on helped us navigate the traffic lights when we moved into the red light setting. From there, it was about managing logistics and focusing on communication—answering all the frequently asked questions, figuring out what it meant to incorporate children and youth into our services, handling locations etc.

"While the red light setting placed a greater deal of stress on a smaller number of people—more responsibility for leaders, and the technical issues of live-streaming into people's lounges—there were surprising and encouraging things as well.

"The congregation was so willing to step up to make things work in difficult circumstances—we noticed this particularly in the area of pastoral care. One of the major reflections of the time in restriction has been how the church has grown in love for one another. It has been encouraging to see people's faithfulness... everyone has pitched in, helped out, enjoyed close fellowship, and got to know new people.

"One thing we noticed was there was a rural-urban difference in terms of response to meeting in smaller groups. "For several groups of people who drive in to Te Awamutu from further away, they appreciated the opportunity to be 'salt and light' in their rural community. One rural group still meets approximately every six weeks for the express purpose of continuing to reach families in their community that were attending the smaller gatherings. Another group of around 80 people from Pirongia (a rural settlement about 15 minutes out of Te Awamutu) have had a small taste of what a church plant in that area might look like, and this is an ongoing conversation.

"Still, throughout the time there was a significant desire to gather back together as a large group, and to a degree, we have returned to 'normal' in terms of how and where we gather.

"Even though we functionally look similar to the way we did two and a half years ago, a lot has changed. While we wouldn't want to go back to navigating restriction, we wouldn't take back the experience as it has been a positive thing for our church overall".



A recent baptism as part of The Street's local service in Porirua. Photo credit: The Street Church.

Reimagining Sunday Gatherings

For the team at The Street in Wellington, the COVID restrictions provided an opportunity to reassess and reimagine the role of Sunday gatherings in terms of discipleship and leadership development.

Pre-pandemic, The Street Church met in three locations on Sundays (City, East and Night), and in multiple locations for life groups throughout the week. The three locations pre-pandemic have now become local services that meet across the Wellington Region.

The biggest change being for City, which has moved to meet in four locations—Mt Victoria, Hutt Valley, Porirua, and Karori (West). Night has also seen a change, meeting together as a large gathering every second Sunday, and meeting in small groups across the city every other Sunday—making the most of the deep relational benefits of meeting in smaller groups.

"Small groups are great ways of going deep in community and helping people follow Jesus day-to-day and these have remained places of meaningful connection, fellowship and discipleship for people throughout the past two years," says Senior Pastor Simon Gill.

"I heard someone make the observation, and I think it's true, that the pandemic was a discipleship stress test for the Church in the West... The measures of weekly attendance numbers and giving revenue didn't always turn out to be good indicators of spiritual maturity. For The Street, the pandemic has helped us focus our attention on growing healthy, resilient disciples of Jesus".

Many of the changes to The Street's gatherings were initially in response to restrictions, but have since

“This refrain I hear so often from people, is that ‘I’ve never felt so connected to church in my life, I’ve never felt so connected to the people that I’m worshipping with’. And that for us is just a massive win, a place where people can come and gather and be known.”

developed into something with renewed purpose. Smaller gatherings in many locations brought a number of opportunities and benefits, says Simon, “This year we’ve entered a season of planting and investing in local services across the city, to see if God would have us establish these as permanent locations.

“Smaller gatherings have helped move people from passive recipients to active participants in Sunday gatherings... the school halls and older buildings we’ve been using for our local services are less intimidating for people developing a preaching or leading gift, and have resulted in people stepping up to lead worship or play instruments”.

The same has been true for preaching, “We’ve been trying to develop more people by finding manageable ways for people to take next steps... one thing we’ve done is ask 2-3 people to share a devotion-style reflection on their favourite verse from Proverbs during the service on Sunday. This is a manageable step in supporting people to take the next step in developing a teaching gift”. In July The Street Church – City

celebrated the milestone of having four preachers teaching in person at each of City’s local services.

In a recent church update, City Lead Pastor Jerram Watts shared, “...it has been a truly amazing couple of months seeing the way these gatherings are thriving... it obviously doesn’t come without its challenges, right? When you take a congregation and ask them to change how they gather... One of the things that comes to mind most is this phrase, this refrain I hear so often from people, is that ‘I’ve never felt so connected to church in my life, I’ve never felt so connected to the people that I’m worshipping with’. And that for us is just a massive win, a place where people can come and gather and be known”.

Jerram also describes other discipleship opportunities that have been developing, including people meeting together to go through systematic theology, several recent baptisms, more chances for people to serve in practical ways, and an increased desire from people to serve their local communities.

“We tried multi-site before,” says Simon. “We went into it with lots of plans and kept running into issues. With the local services, one downside is making plans along the way, but there’s also freedom in that. We think this is what God is leading us in, and we have to trust him”.

Simon says the discernment process is continuing, with the church seeking feedback from members as they work through different challenges and opportunities, “How are we intentional in the training, feedback, and development process? Kids Ministry has been happening in new ways at different local services, and we’re looking at what it means to have people who are more than just police vetted and prepared to look after kids, but are people who are equipped for and passionate about the discipleship of children.

“This has been exciting for us, our elders are involved in more than just governance decisions, but leading people in tangible ways... We’ve noticed that local services are naturally intergenerational in nature, and are also more accessible to local communities, as people are more likely to invite their friends along to a local service, rather than one that is 30+ minutes away”.

Story by Sophia Sinclair.



*Local services providing opportunities for people to grow in their preaching and teaching gifts.
Photo Credit: The Street Church*



AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY



ANTHONY CAMPBELL
LEAD PASTOR REDEEMER CHURCH TAURANGA

Over the past few years I have definitely been reminded that regardless of pandemics or politics, Jesus is still building his Church (Matt 16:18). Jesus is still leading his Church and providing everything it needs (Colossians 1.4; 2.10, 19). Jesus is still caring and protecting his Church as its chief shepherd/pastor (1 Pet. 5:4). Jesus is still with his Church (Matt 28:18-20), equipping his Church (Eph. 4:11-16), and will work in his Church for the joy of holiness of his people (Eph. 5:25:27).

Like many pastors, leaders, and churches around the country (and the world), over the past few years we've scrambled to do things we weren't used to. But we pressed on to keep things simple, make the most of technology, and whenever possible pursue meeting in person.

How blessed was the Church in Aotearoa that the restrictions around COVID-19 began to lift in time for Easter Weekend? Our Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday services felt like a homecoming. We sang

together, pressed into the Lord in prayer, had the Word of God preached, participated in the Lord's Supper, and enjoyed the reality of the gospel together, as a church!

An unexpected opportunity for Redeemer Church was bringing on one of our elders on staff full-time. The uncertainty that COVID-19 brought was also sweet providence for us as we were able to call Philip Brown to be our Preaching and Teaching Pastor.

Philip has been involved with and served the local church in Rotorua since his teens, is a CCCNZ 3TRUSTS scholarship recipient and Master's Graduate from Carey, and in January 2022 began serving Redeemer with his gifted preaching and teaching skills.

While he serves us in this office he'll work alongside me and the elders to grow in other areas of ministry life from pastoral care through to finances and administration. It seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit to do this at this time and we're hopeful for what this will mean for us in church planting and leadership development.



PEOPLE NOT PROGRAMMES



HANNAH AND NIGEL WINDER
ROSEDALE BIBLE CHAPEL

Over the past few years, we have been reminded that first and foremost the programmes, services, and ministries we run are about people, the connections we have with one another, and our connection with God.

It is very easy to have a thin veneer of shallow relationships where we are busy running activities or turning up to services. When those things can't happen, we have the layers peeled back revealing how well invested we are in each other's lives, in loving each other and our determination to grow each other's faith in new and different ways.

During the time we couldn't run our normal Sunday service due to gathering number restrictions, we ran services online via a Zoom link, but many chose not to engage in this way and therefore did not connect with others in the church family for an extended period.

We did try to encourage people to open their homes and invite others to share in the online service together, but there was limited uptake in this regard, in both the offering of homes and attendance when a few homes were opened.

We have learnt from God that we have much work to do in convincing people that being actively part of a church is essential to our faith. While we may get better sermons and music online, at a time that suits us, with the benefit of avoiding others when we can't be bothered, but this only nurtures a 'me focus' and consumer attitude toward church.

When we are truly committed to one another, loving one another, and desiring to serve God through and in his Church, we will be a healthy and maturing church.

We have also realised that real change in people's hearts, attitudes, and commitment to church can only be achieved by the work of the Holy Spirit. The leadership team has a renewed commitment to praying for each church member and is hosting regular prayer meetings for the church online and in person.

The pastoral care of our church needs to be a "whole church" collective responsibility, and one that is modelled well by the leadership team and elders. We have also been reminded that this must extend beyond our Sunday morning service and flow into the week to be truly effective.



The RBC Youth Group doing a working bee planting new shrubs and trees around the church building.

We continue to offer an online live link to our services for those who can't attend in person due to sickness or the need to isolate.

With some families including younger children in our online services, we needed to be mindful of how we communicated, and of our content, so that all ages felt engaged and connected. We are attempting to keep up this good practice as we meet again in person.

While meeting online we started a series in Acts called 'The Essential Question—How can I make a difference for God?' This was great timing to examine the core mission of the Church and our role in it. It is a series we continued when we were back meeting together as it helped us to identify the key values and practices of the Church and ensure these things are a priority for us as we move forward. We ran a home group to unpack this material further during the week and provide another opportunity for deeper connection

and fellowship. It also became the focus of our church family camp which provided a much-needed time of extended gathering and reconnecting. Lakeland Park Christian Camp was an ideal location for this and one we highly recommend.

It has been encouraging to see more of our church family attending services regularly, and others taking the initiative in organising events to regrow our connections and fellowship. Our prayer is that the lessons learnt from the last couple of years will help us intentionally grow in our love for one another and this will bear witness to the love of God for all people.

Nigel Winder works for Scripture Union NZ and is a Rosedale Bible Chapel Ministry Leader (part time) and Elder. Hannah Winder is the Rosedale Bible Chapel Church Administrator (part time) and is part of the CCCNZ National Admin Team.

CREATIVE WAYS TO PARTNER WITH YOUR LOCAL CAMPSITE



RICHARD DAVIS
CCCNZ CAMPING ENABLER

As I reflect on the past 12 months I'm drawn to a rather well-known but sometimes misused Scripture. 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28).

It's sometimes misused, when only that verse is mentioned, because the reality is that we need to look at the whole of Romans 8. This chapter describes how God is at work in a suffering world while also reminding us (those who are united in Christ) that we are being transformed by faith, that the Church is being transformed and that—because of the gospel—our suffering and hardship will come to an end.

Over the past year or two, camps have endured a fair bit of suffering and hardship—whether that be financial hardship, staffing losses, pressure on the wellbeing of leaders, loss of core ministry opportunities, and loss of connection to build relationships.

What has God been revealing?

Hardship and difficulty are realities of life, but it is what we learn from these times and our absolute trust in God's timing that allows us to carry on moving forwards. And whilst we are still working in a COVID-19 pandemic period, God is still calling people to himself through this ministry we call Christian camping.

There is a desire to support one another, a desire to support our communities, a desire to build relationships with support ministries and churches, a desire to develop our people, a desire to be prepared to adapt, a desire to be visionary, and—above all else—to allow God to lead.

A snapshot of what God has been doing

Whilst COVID has affected everyone throughout New Zealand this has been a particularly difficult time for the communities of South Auckland. Tāmaki Community Church saw the need but didn't have the resources to meet the need. In stepped Willow Park



The team at Willow Park cooking meals in partnership with Tāmaki Community Church.

and their fantastic catering team. Willow Park had no camps running, and what better way to keep busy in the kitchen than to prepare weekly meals? This was an example of taking ministry 'out of the box' and a fantastic example of a church and a camp working together for the benefit of a local community.

After the Pasifika and Māori Leaders Dinner in Auckland in July, many who attended have raised an interest in how their churches might work closely with camps. These discussions are ongoing, but one result is that LifeChurch Manurewa are having their first ever Ladies Retreat at Willow Park. This has been made possible as Willow Park has a 'pay as you are able' or 'koha' scheme for CCCNZ churches. We trust that this will be of encouragement for other churches of all cultures to start to partner with camps.

Pacific Park is another camp which is seeking to serve local churches. The camp is unique in Christian camping, as it is also a motor camp accommodation provider and has an array of motel rooms, large meeting areas, and one of the best large spa pools around. They are providing a discount to churches who want to

utilise the site and it is their vision that every weekend the camp is being used by church groups.

It has been a privilege to see churches and camps starting to work together in trying to solve long standing issues and needs—in particular, meeting the demands of evangelism and discipling new Christians and our youth. Hope Community Church, Grace Community Church and Tasman Church (all CCCNZ churches in the Nelson-Tasman Region) have always had a good relationship with Teapot Valley Christian Camp. However, they have recently started to embark on a journey working together to identify gaps, share resources, and provide training that will result in building a strong relationship for sharing the gospel.

Clark Road Chapel in Whangārei have previously used Marsden Bay Christian Camp (MBCC) as their base for hosting holiday camps. However, COVID put a stop to this over the past few years. This year MBCC partnered with Word of Life and CRC for winter camps, and saw some amazing results. Over 90 children attended, far exceeding their expectations and a number made decisions to follow Jesus.

MBCC Staff Member and CRC Youth Group Leader Matt Scott shared how he responded to a request and dropped off a Bible to one of the children after the camp. Matt was met by a tearful mother whose own faith journey had stalled and now the whole family is travelling 45 minutes to attend church and the children are loving the kids programme at CRC.

This year has seen Sonshine Ranch Christian Camp in Papakura, Auckland join the CCCNZ Heritage Camps. The camp is a traditional horse camp (hence the name)



MBCC Staff Member and CRC Youth Group Leader Matt Scott sharing at the Regional Summit how God has been at work in a church and camp partnership.



Hope Community Church enjoys Teapot Valley Christian Camp during an outdoor Easter service.

and has run holiday camps for many years. We look forward to the opportunity to develop this site further and to look for churches who will partner with them.

Moving Forward

These are some of the stories that have come out of a difficult few years, but they are so encouraging as we move forward. Let's consider how camping could look different to what it was in pre-pandemic times. It's fair to say that Christian camping in New Zealand still provides for massive opportunity and evangelism. However, it is equally important that those who have recently put their trust in Jesus are disciplined, taught through Scripture, and welcomed into the Body life of a local Christian community. This is the role of the Church.

Camps are also great development opportunities for young Christians who can share their faith with younger people and develop their leadership, evangelism, and pastoral gifts at the same time. Camps provide awesome training opportunities for our up-and-coming pastors and Christian leaders.

In order to see these things working, churches and camps need to be working much closer together—to see the local church grow in strength, and gospel opportunities grasped. We look forward to seeing these developing partnerships and prayerfully commit our campsites to God's glory. If you'd love to know more about developing a partnership with a campsite near you, but don't know where to start, we'd love to talk more.

richarddavis@cccnz.nz

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Around nine years ago the team from Church on Vogel in Roslyn, Palmerston North, had a vision to build a community centre and begin connecting with their surrounding community in intentional and meaningful ways.

Roslyn is a high deprivation area with incidents of drug abuse, youth crime and domestic violence all prevalent in the community.

Volunteers from the church began working in Roslyn School, the local primary school, helping out with reading. They'd meet up one-to-one with students who needed support in reading, and over time relationships began to develop with the teachers, school leadership, students and their whānau.

“These relationships gave us the opportunity to partner with our local community and ask, ‘are there any areas you need help with?’” says Sarah Mitchell, who works as a Community Worker and Programmes Coordinator for Church on Vogel’s community trust, The House Next Door.

“The reading support developed into more. Volunteers would come in to do baking, woodwork, and other skills with the kids”.

Soon these school connections began to feed into other opportunities.

Kids started to join the youth group, and it grew from 6-8 young people into 30-40 kids from both the church and the community. People began to come along to the church-led playgroup for caregivers and pre-schoolers, now running three times per week with 50+ children and their carers attending each session. The Rally programme also grew, meeting each fortnight.

“Along the way we kept asking the question: ‘what can we do to support you?’ and the combination of relationship and trust helped us develop programmes that actually serve the community”.

For example, the need for kids to have input and supervision after school developed into an after school programme. “We saw the kids were at a loose end and we applied for funding to start up a table tennis club. This grew into a place where volunteers connect and build relationships with kids over board games, cards, basketball, and other activities”.

“The kids walk down from the school two days a week. We have around 20-35 kids that join us. We’ll often do some form of cooking with them, like baking scones,



Sarah Mitchell (right front) in the midst of community ministry with The House Next Door.

cakes—it’s all part of learning life skills together”. A holiday programme also runs during the school holidays.

There are some exciting stories of how God has been at work through these relationships:

“One young person we met through maths tutoring at the school became part of our church family. We walked alongside her for several years, through struggles with mental health and other things, and she joined our church community and came to faith, eventually getting baptised”.

Relationship is at the heart of what Church on Vogel are seeking to do. It’s about relationships within the community, and introducing people to a relationship with Jesus. A year ago, the dream for a community hub was realised, and The House Next Door was opened, using the house next to the church as a space intentionally fitted out to host community ministry activities.

Sarah emphasises that working to build relationships with a local community is about being patient and building momentum, “There are lots of ways to establish connections, finding the right people to do the right things is part of it. Look at who you’ve got in your church and the gifts God has given them, then create space for them to thrive and go from there”.

More about The House Next Door, or to get in touch with Sarah Mitchell: 021 311 418, sarahmariam12@gmail.com

Story by Sophia Sinclair



SUPPORTING LOCAL SCHOOLS



JULIE MCKINNON
CCCNZ CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES ENABLER

I recently caught up with Joy Wallace from Manawarū Bible Chapel and heard about the ministry of Launchpad that she and her husband Dennis have been involved in for over 40 years.

Involvement in the local school has always been part of the strategy of Manawarū Bible Chapel.

“This is what we do as a church; it’s always been part of the fabric of the church to be involved in the school. We feel very supported by the church. School is a big part of the community and there are big needs in schools. Churches can have a huge impact on a school community”.

Schools are in need of good role models and often welcome the involvement of the local church. The local principal tells Joy, “you can’t have too many good people in a school”.

It doesn’t have to be in the form of a programme like Launchpad. Joy has recently begun going into the school for 30 – 60 minutes a week to listen to the children read. There is a real need in schools for chaplains and mentors and Denis is also a school chaplain through Lifewalk.

In the past, the church has helped with projects such as planting in the school gully. “It opens doors and starts conversations”.

Launchpad’s curriculum lines up with the school’s values. Joy and Denis have worked hard to establish a personal connection and relationship with the principal, “She can see we are interested in the kids and their wellbeing”.

Some people are frustrated by Launchpad in that it doesn’t allow presenters to evangelise, but Joy sees it as a relational ministry where she can be part of the children’s journey of faith:

“It’s a seed-sowing ministry—we don’t always see the fruit. But it is enough to know we are part of their journey... I love the kids. I remind myself that this is the only time some of them ever hear about Jesus.

“The main thing for me is that they leave my class knowing that there is a God and God loves them and that they leave my class thinking that was fun. I want them to have a positive attitude towards God”.

CHURCH TOGETHER

Thank you to all the wonderful ministry leaders from around Northland, Auckland, the Bay of Plenty and Waikato who joined us at our first two regional summits. Here's a snapshot of the days, and some feedback from those who attended.

'Church Together' is our theme for 2022, with a focus on being together with leaders from CCCNZ/Open Brethren heritage churches to learn, share, and be encouraged for gospel work in your region.

We're holding two more regional summits in the coming months in Ōtaki (Lower North Island), and Christchurch (South Island). More info: www.cccnz.nz/regional-summits



Participants at a Prayer workshop at the Auckland Regional Summit.

"I valued the chance to bump into a range of different people from other churches and catch up"

"I valued the opportunity to network after such a challenging season"

"I valued the sense of togetherness and shared ministry"

"An excellent day with lots of great learning and connection. Thank you!"



Learning and discussing intergenerational ministry at the Auckland Regional Summit.

“Thanks, Summit was awesome. I appreciated it not being on a weekday, which allowed more of our volunteers to attend”



Leaders from Lifezone Church in Tauranga at the Regional Summit held at Tötara Springs.

“I valued the focus on the Bible having the answers, and shared purpose in seeking to reach out with the gospel”



Leaders from Tauwhare Gospel Chapel at the Regional Summit held at Tötara Springs.

“Great to have the snapshots of what various churches are doing in their communities. Really thankful for the encouragement to press on and work together for the sake of others coming to know Christ”



Sharing and fellowship over morning tea at the Regional Summit held at Willow Park Christian Camp.

JOIN US!

NORTHLAND

Clark Road Chapel
Raumati Crescent Chapel

BAY OF PLENTY

Fenton Park Bible Church
Kawerau Bible Chapel
Lifezone Church
Lakes Church (Rotorua)
Mount Bible Chapel
Paengaroa Bible Chapel
Redeemer Church
Roosevelt Road Chapel
The Orchard Church

TARANAKI

New Plymouth Community Church

HAWKE'S BAY

Heretaunga Community Church
Onekawa Bible Church
Riverbend Bible Church

NELSON-TASMAN

Grace Church, Richmond
Hope Community Church
Tasman Church

OTAGO

Anchorage Church
Caversham Community Church
Cornerstone International Bible Church
Orwell Street Church
Riverside Chapel

AUCKLAND

Amatakiloa Gospel Church
Auckland Bible Church
Auckland Japanese Christian Church
Birkenhead Community Church
Eden Community Church
Franklin Bible Church
Howick Community Church
Kelston Community Church
LifeChurch Manurewa
Lincoln Road Bible Chapel
Manurewa Bible Church
Massey Community Church
Mt Wellington Community Church
New Lynn Bible Chapel
Northcross Church
Orewa Community Church
Pakuranga Christian Fellowship
Papatoetoe Bible Chapel

Rossgrove Chapel
Samoan Open Brethren, Ranui
Takapuna Bible Church
Tāmaki Community Church
Terry Street Bible Chapel
Wiremu Street Bible Chapel

WELLINGTON

Church @ Cedarwood
Coast Community Church
Onslow Community Church
Porirua Gospel Chapel
The Anchor Church
Titahi Bay Community Church

SOUTHLAND

Rosedale Bible Chapel

WAIKATO

Agora Church
Chapel Hill Community Church
Hillcrest Chapel
Hukanui Bible Church
Kaipaki Combined Church
Manawarū Bible Chapel
Matamata Bible Church
Northgate Community Church
Paeroa Bible Chapel
Putaruru Gospel Chapel
Raleigh Street Christian Centre
Te Awamutu Bible Chapel
Whitiora Bible Church

MANAWATŪ-WHANGANUI

Church on Vogel
Crossroads Church
Feilding Bible Chapel
Kingston Community Church
Ingestre Street Bible Church
Queen Street Chapel - Levin
York Street Chapel - Levin

CANTERBURY

Bryndwr Chapel
Church Street Bible Chapel
EAUKS (Ekalesia Au Uso Kerisiano Samoa)
Glentunnel Chapel
Redemption Church Christchurch
Riccarton Community Church
Rowley Bible Church
Rutland Street Church
Springs Community Church
Wairakei Road Bible Church

This is a list of linked in churches as of September 2022. For more information on how to join us, see www.ccnz.nz/link-in

