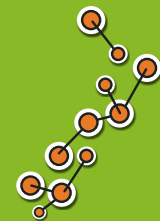


Rongopai

WORKING TOGETHER TO TAKE THE GOOD NEWS BACK TO NEW ZEALAND

Rongopai is
the newsletter
of the Christian
Community
Churches of
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CCCNZ
Together Works Better



The tide is turning in New Zealand. In school halls, unused church buildings, pubs, scout halls and lounge rooms, people are being plucked from death and brought to life. Over 50 churches have been planted in New Zealand in the last 10 years and their efforts are bearing gospel fruit.

An engineer in Auckland, a marketing student in Christchurch, a tour-bus driver in Wellington - their stories and a multitude of others are emerging as people hear the gospel and follow Jesus. Churches are being evangelised into existence in this country, but what are the driving forces behind them?

Why plant churches?

Planting churches is about the advance of the gospel! We are surrounded by people who desperately need to hear the life-giving gospel. Evangelising churches into existence must always be for the advance of God's kingdom, as dying people are brought to life and grow into maturity.

Biblically, we must plant more churches

There is much that we could look at to unpack the biblical reasons to plant churches, but we will focus on the Great Commission and a snippet from Paul's planting. In Matthew 28, Jesus speaks those potent words which have carried the gospel from the disciples standing on that mountain in Galilee, to every corner of the world.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

These words have rightly carried the message of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem in the 1st century to nations all around the world in the 21st century. The great commission is more than a command to go and tell people about Jesus. Disciples are to be baptised into the family of God and as such into the church. In the local church disciples gather as God's people under His Word. They are taught the commands of Jesus. They are encouraged and grow to become more and more like the Lord Jesus.

Have we understood these words the way the disciples did? As the disciples took up the call of the Great Commission, they evangelised churches into existence. The local church is not only the result of making disciples, but also a vehicle to keep making disciples, as more and more people are captivated by the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonian church

Wherever Paul preaches the gospel, churches are planted. In Acts 17, when Paul and his companions visit Thessalonica, they bring with them the message about Jesus: *"This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah"*. After being in Thessalonica only a few weeks, Paul leaves behind an infant church. What Paul writes to this church in his first letter gives us a magnificent view into what he desires for the churches he plants.

Paul commends the Thessalonian church for two things – they are known for their faith *and* the Lord's message rang out from them:

1 Thess 1:7 - *"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere."*

Throughout the book of Acts, as the gospel spreads, churches are planted. These churches then become sending hubs to see the gospel continue to spread everywhere.

Isn't this what we should desire for our churches too?

Planting churches reaches people with the gospel

Much has been written about how effective church planting is at reaching people with the gospel. Leading missiologist C. Peter Wagner famously claimed - *"Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven."*

Studies around the world involving thousands of churches show that claim to be true.^{1,2,3} The numbers vary study to study, but the conclusions are the same. Church plants are more effective at

1. Church Plant Survivability and Health Study 2007, Ed Stetzer Phillip Connor, 2007
2. The State of Church Planting in the U.S. Ed Stetzer, Micah Fries, and Daniel Im, 2015
3. Support, Experience and Intentionality: 2015-16 Australian Church Planting Study, 2016

reaching those who don't yet know Jesus with the gospel than older churches. Church plants necessitate an intentionality in mission, and an urgency for evangelism, as well as a plethora of opportunities for Christians to step up and serve in areas they haven't yet had experience in. Through all this, the gospel is proclaimed and the glory of God is made known, through broken people like you and me.

Why evangelise churches into existence? Because the result of mission is a missional church. Humanly speaking, churches that have been evangelised into existence are the most effective tool we have for reaching people with the gospel.

How do we do it?

The methods employed in planting churches will be as varied as the communities that they are reaching. Who will form the core of this new gospel work and how has God gifted them? Where will the gospel first produce fruit? What form of governance will be applied? What style of music? What evangelism tools or small group material will be used?

Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird make the point in their book *Viral Churches* that the key to multiplying churches is to multiply leaders of God's people. For a church to plant another church there will be an abundance of areas people will need to serve in. With that comes an abundance of opportunity to equip the saints for works of service in nearly every ministry area: welcome, Bible study leaders, preachers, elders, Sunday school teachers, musicians.



Developing leaders who develop leaders is to invest in the engine-room of church, resulting in more people doing more ministry in more places. In their book *The Trellis and the Vine*, Col Marshall and Tony Payne introduce a ministry mind-shift that has been

key to bringing about an abundance of men and women equipped for gospel ministry around the world. *"[Churches] need to make a conscious shift— away from erecting and maintaining structures, and towards growing people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ."*

If we can adopt this mind-shift throughout NZ, we will see disciples of the Lord Jesus not just growing, but becoming fellow workers! They will go on to lead ministries according to their gifts, and mobilise others for gospel work.

What does that look like? Prayerfully reading the Bible with a few people, while training them to read the Bible with others. Then releasing them to intentionally repeat that cycle with others, to see a culture of reading the Bible pervade your church. It looks like identifying the people who have the potential to lead God's people according to their gifts, and training and mentoring them. It necessarily means viewing our congregations as not merely the recipients of ministry, but partners in it.

Where do we start?

Planting churches starts with rediscovering the dependence on the Spirit who inspired the word of the gospel that has gripped so many across our great country since our earliest beginnings.

God has been incredibly good to us in New Zealand. Since the first sermon was preached in 1814 and Scriptures were printed in Te Reo

Maori in 1835, disciples have been made, baptised, and taught across our great country. In the decades that follow, the gospel has sounded forth around New Zealand and churches planted, often forming the beating heart of communities around the country.

In 1881, the Open Brethren movement in NZ was young – 12 churches in all. Over the 90 years that followed more than 230 churches were planted – an average of almost three per year! What was achieved in those years under God's powerful hand is nothing short of phenomenal!

Planting churches starts with remembering the big gospel dreams. God has bigger plans for His kingdom than we could ever have. Will we dare to have the same dreams, trusting that God will work through weak people, just as He has always done in His strength? Will we rediscover the gospel-driven passion that was at the heart of planting churches throughout New Zealand?

Working together to see new ground broken with the gospel

We will be able to do more together. Around the world church planting networks have been bringing churches together to form a critical mass of church planting.

Research shows that under God, the best church planting will be marked by: *having the right people planting churches, with the right expectations, the right support behind them, and a dedication to multiplying beyond their current church.*

MULTIPLY is a church planting network for New Zealand, with a vision to bring together churches that have a common desire to win men and women for Christ, planting churches as the gospel does its work. Leveraging off the work of similar networks around the world, MULTIPLY exists to identify, enable, and unleash missional leaders to evangelise churches into existence across denominations, throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

What could happen if churches from denominations and fellowships around New Zealand, that love Jesus, worked together:

- Holding our distinctives, while investing in and drawing from a network that has the advance of the gospel at its heart.
- Identifying the right people to evangelise churches into existence, drawing from the experience of Kiwi church planters to assess aspiring planters.
- Drawing on the gifts and experience God has given us, enabling church plants, while sharing what we have learned about planting healthy churches that reach people with the gospel.
- Providing coaching and the support of a peer network, as we unleash missional leaders to extend the reach of the great commission in Aotearoa.

Will we unite around our common desire to live out the Great Commission, advance the gospel and evangelise churches into existence around New Zealand?

Dave Geisbers became convinced of the hope offered by Jesus while completing his Master of Engineering at the University of Canterbury (where he also met his wife Rachael who was studying Psychology). Together they have served as volunteers in several church plants in Christchurch and Auckland, as well as in pastoral staff capacities. They love seeing people come to know Jesus, so in February 2014 they moved from Christchurch to Auckland to start Multiply. Dave serves as the General Manager of Multiply.



Hobsonville Church Plant

When God brings the pieces together...but not in the way you expected.

In 2012, God was up to something in Hobsonville.

Eldership from three West Auckland churches (Lincoln Road Bible Chapel, Massey Community Church, and Te Atatu Bible Chapel – now known as 'The Chapel') had a common belief. All three felt that God wanted them to ensure that Jesus was part of the new development known as Hobsonville Point.

In obedience to this conviction, representatives of the three churches began to meet and pray.

While they prayed, God was bringing two other pieces of the church-plant puzzle together: Gavin and Amy Gunston from Kumeu Baptist.



Gavin and Amy had experienced a strong calling from God to go and live as missionaries in the new Hobsonville Point community, and to serve under others to help plant a 'missional church'. Through a series of events, God led Gavin and Amy to connect with the three churches.

On 18 Oct 2012, a Memorandum of Understanding was formed between the churches, with Elders chosen to represent their church and support the church plant.

Following this, Gavin was called by the Combined Eldership Team to become the Missional Leader for the Hobsonville Point missional church plant and Amy and Gavin were commissioned as a missionary family.

The Gunstons intuitively realised that this church plant would not follow the traditional model of setting up a service to attract people. Church had to be taken out to the market place. Their first steps were to establish the Hobsonville Community Trust (HCT) and to spend four months researching and listening to the Hobsonville Point community – to understand its needs, concerns, hopes and dreams.

"This research and understanding guided us in how we went about serving our local community. We invested significant resources and energy into advocacy for the local community, which meant connecting with and empowering local people. We also provided youth work to the new Secondary school. All of these touch-points enabled us to start a Christian faith community at The Point, which has become known as the Hobsonville Point Church Family (HPCF)."

When Gavin and Amy Gunston moved into Hobsonville Point in August 2013, approximately 100 homes were occupied. Gordon Summerville (HCT Trustee) and his wife Margaret (both on Combined Eldership, representing Massey Community Church), also chose to live in Hobsonville Point. Together with the Gunstons (and other families that have since connected with the HPCF), they are building a missional community of believers.

The establishment of the Hobsonville Point Church Family has been teamwork from the beginning. God was first, as always, then local people and local churches joined Him by investing their time, learnings, resources and financial backing to help the church plant take root.





Pokeno Church Plant

A different expression of church in Pokeno

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

Not all church planting work is the result of blue-sky thinking and well thought out plans. At the ground level, sometimes God's great work appears to break open in a happen-stance kind of way.

Like in Pokeno, with the Goolds.



In 2014, Howard and Jill were looking to settle in Morrinsville. Both were in their early 70s, and after completing 10 years of service pastoring with the Putaruru Gospel Chapel, they were now looking to start the next chapter of life.

The plan was simple enough:

sell the house in Putaruru, build a house in Morrinsville, and possibly start working with the older members at Morrinsville Baptist. Val Goold, Howard and Jill's daughter, was set to join them and begin her PHD from their new home.

Except the Putaruru house sale fell through.

Five minutes before the house sale deadline, the buying couple backed out. The resulting domino effect meant that all plans were on hold, except, as Howard points out, God's plans. *"He had other ideas about what we were to be doing. We just couldn't see what He had lined up for us."*

Relocating in Pokeno

While Howard and Jill carried out a two-month revisit to Europe, Val was hired as the Campus Director of Laidlaw College's Manukau branch. That meant relocating to South Auckland.

Various locations were looked at, including Pukekohe and district, but the three Goolds felt that Pokeno was a good option.

One section, in particular, caught their eye. Howard explains: *"Within a specific subdivision, there was an elevated section that overlooked a large reserve area. It was the best plot of land, with planted and wetland areas buffering it from other possible house builds."*

"A British couple already had this section signed up. Then the day before we met the developer, the couple needed to go back to England, which meant the section was available. Not only that, the company offered the section to us at the lower price the British couple had paid three years earlier. We could never have arranged such a thing, and certainly hadn't earned it. Isn't that so like God?"

Why here, Lord?

Now the Goolds were residents of Pokeno. While that suited Val with her new position with Laidlaw, it raised a question with Howard and Jill: **Why here, Lord?**



A cursory look around Pokeno showed several things. First, there were no regular church services there, just a part time service on the outskirts of the town.

Second, much of Pokeno's community life revolved around a Sunday market.

Howard and Jill briefly considered finding a church in nearby Pukekohe, but this approach clashed with his convictions. *"Sharing the gospel can be a bit forced, but if you share life, making God known becomes more natural. So, if at all possible, I like to live, work, worship in the one place. It makes life transparent to the people I wish to share with."*

With that in mind, Howard went to the market to see what opportunities existed.

"When I initially visited the market, it scared the daylights out of me, and I thought, 'What am I doing?' That's when the lady running a haircut stall asked me exactly that. 'What are you doing?' she inquired. I replied 'I'm planning to have a stall' 'That's marvellous!' she beamed, 'The other stall owners are so friendly. You'll love it here.' All I could say was 'THANK YOU, LORD. I was in.'"

Howard kept things simple. He called his stall **THE SPOT** and uses a variety of signs that ask questions for people to think about (like one that has the face of a scared cat with the words *'The world can seem a scary place. Are you future--proofed with God?'*). Lots of people smile at that one.

He also set up A3 boards with scriptures in bold lettering.



"People can't miss that I'm religious as I give out leaflets and posters that explain who I am and what I'm doing. Each day we get people stopping to read the scriptures and the signs. I'm not aggressive at all, but I have a table with two chairs which are an open invitation for people to sit down and talk. And they do. Some people have questions. Others want me to pray for them. And to others I just discuss life and give out materials for them to work through."

Each Sunday is long, starting at 6.45am and going through to 1pm. But from the ensuing conversations, the Goolds have gathered up a small number of people to start a home group.

"Three of our home group families have come from market connections. Including Val, Jill and me, there are 12 of us who meet in our house once a week. Our vision is that in our subdivision, which has 11 blocks, we would like to see at least one home group develop in each block. That's our goal."

Do the Goolds see a church building in their future? *"We have no*

plans of going down that route, as people can be reluctant to come to a church building. We'd rather take church to them. Some feel that by not attending a church, I have betrayed or reneged on what I previously stood for, but very few from Pokeno are going to church in the traditional sense, so we seek to do church in a way that they can relate to."

Monday to Saturday?

Not the type to slip quietly into retirement, Howard looked around for other opportunities. He found them 15 minutes up the road at Springhill prison, Meremere.



Normally, gaining pastoral access to such a facility takes time and paperwork, but because Howard had previously worked as a prison visitor at Rangipo prison, transferring his credentials from Rangipo to Spring Hill proved to be relatively simple.

"Initially, I started doing the rounds with the OAC guys (Open Air Campaigners). They have a couple of weekly groups going, so I tagged along on Wednesdays - 6-7 men come to these meetings, which is good."

"But what sparked something in me were the conversations we started having through the fences. A number of guys spoke to me and asked 'What are you? A case worker? No? You're a Chaplain? What can I do to come and see you?'"

"The guards were open to me having one-on-one talks with prisoners, so I started doing just that. The whole thing grew. Many men shared with their mates about the talks we were having, and guards started asking me to work with specific prisoners."

One day a week soon turned into 4½, over which time, Howard would see 50-60 men.

"It's incredible to see how God is transforming their lives. Many of these incarcerated men would ask God: 'God, if you're real, show me something of yourself.' And they would get answers, but no two answers were the same. God was meeting each person in very specific ways."

Prison Monday to Friday. Markets on Sunday. A home group on Tuesday nights. It's not part of some extensive 5-year church planting plan. It's just what happens when God's servants make themselves available, wherever they find themselves.

"We're so grateful to God for opening doors for us at this stage of our lives. We also deeply appreciate the constant prayer and practical support of our two church families, Putaruru and Manawaru."

2017 CCCNZ REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Engaging Scripture

If you want the Word of God to have a greater place in your life, ministry and work, then come to the 2017 CCCNZ Regional Conference.

Engaging Scripture is the theme.

You'll hear compelling talks that build the case for the absolute necessity of Scriptural-engagement for our own health and the health of our ministries. You'll be equipped to read the Bible with others.

Keynote Speaker: Nigel Pollock



Nigel Pollock is our speaker for Engaging Scripture. Nigel is one of the most gifted and humorous teachers of scripture in New Zealand. He has spoken to audiences of thousands around the world and from groups of 2000 to 2 across New Zealand.

Nigel has led Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship in New Zealand for the last 10 years. Paul Windsor was on Nigel's interview panel and made the comment that his preaching was the very best he had heard in a very long time. Nigel is committed to the Scriptures being at the heart of our discipleship, evangelism, worship and mission.

CCCNZ Speakers

The CCCNZ team will share how their services of advocating for our family of churches, supporting Elders and Leaders, advising churches on administration, growing training in local churches and planting new churches and encouraging existing ones can serve you and your ministry.

The big upsides from this conference

- You'll hear talks that help you place scripture at the centre of your life and ministry
- You'll learn how to practically read the Bible with someone younger than yourself



- You'll share meals with those in similar ministries to you
- You'll hear how CCCNZ and a range of Support Ministries can serve you and your church
- You'll unpack how the content applies to your local church
- You'll learn what God is doing in your region

We are aiming for a simple but deeply significant time together. We'd love you to join us at the Regional Conferences, so if there's any way we can help you and your church family join us, let us know.

Costs (excluding Canterbury)

- Early Bird Young Adult: (16-25yr): \$75
- Young Adult (16-25yr): \$90
- Adult: \$105
- Under 25 sponsorship: download the sponsorship letter from the CCCNZ website.

Canterbury Costs

The Canterbury conference is not an overnight event.

Costs are as follows:

- \$45 per Person • \$75 per Couple

CCCNZ Regional Conference Dates

- Canterbury - 19th-20th May @ Rutland Street Church
- Southland - 26th-27th May @ Lakeland Park
- Kapiti Coast - 8th-9th September @ Forest Lakes
- Auckland - 15th-16th September @ Willow Park

For more information and registration see events at www.cccnz.nz



Bunnythorpe Church Plant

“We weren't seeking to grow a church. We were just looking to buy a bigger house!”

In 2012, with four young kids, it wasn't time for Mike and Rebekah Mudford to plant a church. It was time to find a bigger house.

They looked in all the right locations to accommodate the kids' schooling, their workplaces and their church. Nothing worked.

Except in Bunnythorpe.

Bunnythorpe is a small village 10 minutes out of Palmerston North. And it had a house for sale that ticked all the Mudford boxes. All Mike and Rebekah needed was for their own house sale to go through before the close-off.

It did, with 40 minutes to spare!



After a few years in the area, God started placing it on their hearts that there needed to be an evangelical presence in the community. Mike recalls: *“We wanted to be sure that the desire to reach those in our own backyard was from God and not of the flesh. So, we took our time, continuing to settle into the community, building friendships and praying that God would reveal what He wanted us to do.”*

Late 2014, the Bunnythorpe Methodist Church was placed on the market. That sparked a renewed interest in Mike and Rebekah to establish a ministry within the community. Following several months of discussions with the Methodist church, an agreement was reached that allowed the Mudfords to use the Methodist church building on Friday nights, while it was on the market.

Friday night?

“We chose Friday night because many people have commitments such as sports on Saturdays and Sunday. Doing something on Friday opened up possibilities.”

On Friday 29th May 2015, the Mudfords held their first church service. The congregation consisted of a small group of families from Bunnythorpe and the wider area. One notable group was teenagers who, without their parents, had come from the surrounding districts of Woodville, Palmerston North and Feilding.

Bunnythorpe Family Church was born.

“When we started church, we had a couple of non-negotiables. First, we were determined to stay true to the Bible and the preaching of the Word of God. The other was being family friendly. That meant that kids had to be part of the service. So, in every service we include action songs that the children can get into.”

Next Steps

As the church started to take root, the Lord led the Mudfords to start Every Boys and Girls Rallies. The rally movement had been long standing in the community, so people were familiar with it, but they had ceased several years ago.

Mike remembers how the community embraced the rallies: *“People were genuinely excited to see it running again and got right behind it. As another way of connecting into the community, it worked. Non-church kids started to come to rally evenings; some even came to church. Parents with a history of rallies also supported what we were doing by sending their kids along. One man, an atheist with a big beard and rides a Harley Davidson, started to send his daughter along to rally. He told me ‘You know my stance, but hats off to you for what you're doing.’”*

Light Party instead of Halloween

In October 2015, the fledgling Bunnythorpe Family Church hosted the first Bunnythorpe Light Party – a positive, Christian alternative to Halloween. Over 400 children from around the district came. *"This was so exciting for us! It showed the church how God could use us to reach people, providing we relied on Him and worked as a team."*

Not easy to reach people

Despite some event success, the Mudfords have found the community of Bunnythorpe hard to reach for Christ. Bunnythorpe is a blue-collar town, filled with people who know about hard work, but who are largely untouched by poverty. As a result, they don't feel the need for Christ, even when their need for God is explained.



So how do you reach them? Mike and Rebekah's approach is very grassroots: *"It's all about one-on-one connections and lots of dinners. You can't rush it. But living in a small village, you rub shoulders with people. Conversations just happen. The neighbour's kids are climbing your fence, which usually opens up a talk with their Mum. Or we bump into kids we don't know and simply invite them to Youth Group. Stuff like that – nothing fancy."*

Very quickly, the people of Bunnythorpe have come to know the Mudfords and what they stand for. And they are valued. Even at the monthly Community Meeting, time is set aside to ask, **"What is the church up to?"** With Mike at Rally, Rebekah is the one who attends. *"I tell them what's going on at Rally and Youth Group. They respect us and know that we care. Even the mayor is encouraging toward us. He loved the Light Party."*

A new young adults group

Conscious of the fact that young adults tend to walk away from God, Mike and Rebekah felt led to start a group specifically for 18-25 year olds. Mike says *"It's not formal. It's mostly one-on-one connecting, often with an invitation – 'Hey, you should come long to church. We're doing the book of Daniel!'"*

Everything we do has to be immersed in prayer. We have prayer warriors from various churches, from Auckland to Wellington. Bunnythorpe Family Church has been blessed with the prayers and guidance of both Kingston Community Church and Woodville Gospel Hall throughout the past two years. We need all the help we can get.

Not everything is smooth

Even with prayer, there are frustrations. Often Mike and Rebekah are forced to cope with a lack of leadership numbers. If a worship leader can't turn up on Sunday, there isn't a pool of stand-ins to call up on short notice. But God blesses even these moments. Rebekah says



"These frustrations lead to opportunities for kids to step up and grow. It blows us away how people step up, and how others are willing to listen to the word of God imperfectly preached, or songs imperfectly sung. The young people may lack skill, but they do it."

Time to move. Literally

After over a year on the market, the Methodist church had firm purchase offers coming in. That meant Bunnythorpe Family Church had to move.

Mike says *"We were a bit sad that our time using the building had come to an end. But our God is a God of provision and He came through for us through the good people of Bunnythorpe Gospel Chapel."*

They have been fantastic. They understood what we're doing and have supported us with the building they are using! After some discussion, we moved our ministries into the Bunnythorpe Gospel Hall in March 2016.

In hindsight, it's where we should have been from the start. It was like coming home to our faith roots.

Good things are happening

On any given Friday night, 30-40 people from around the district come along to the Bunnythorpe Family Church service. They hear the preaching of the Word of God, verse by verse and experience genuine spiritual growth.

Through the youth ministries, Mike and Rebekah have seen several young people come to the Lord and have had the privilege of baptising one.



Good things are happening in Bunnythorpe.