

Rongopai

WORKING TOGETHER TO TAKE THE GOOD NEWS BACK TO NEW ZEALAND

Rongopai is the newsletter
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YOUTH MINISTRY & THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH



MURRAY BROWN
CCCNZ YOUTH ENABLER

Every so often I've heard the opinion expressed that goes something like this: "Youth Ministry is not biblical. Scripture contains no examples of age-specific ministries or groups."

The observation is, of course, accurate and—given our commitment to the sufficiency and inerrancy of Scripture—the conclusion seems compelling: that we should close our youth ministries and disciple our young people within the context of the wider church activities and programmes.

But before we do this let's look a little deeper.

What we see around us is a society that is very different from that described in the New Testament. In those times a child reached Bar or Bat Mitzvah at age 13 and became obligated to fulfil all of God's commandments. They were essentially "adults".

Our present-day society is, however, far more complex and as such greater learning and preparation is required before a child can be properly considered "adult" and be expected to function as such.

"What's needed is an integrated approach where a youth ministry exists but is well incorporated into the life of the wider church."

Equally, sociology has documented the widening gulf between children and adults and the emergence of adolescence, meaning that ministry to teenagers is something of a cross-cultural exercise that requires careful thought and effective strategizing.

So, while youth ministry is not strictly "biblical", cultural awareness and sensitivity certainly is. Expecting we can just use the same approach with teens that works for adults is not only naïve but cannot be justified by taking a holistic view of Scripture.

However, as is often the case with theology and ecclesiology, avoiding one extreme can push us to embrace the other extreme that can be at least as unhelpful if not more so.

That extreme has been played out in many churches over the past 50 years and has seen them delegate youth ministry to a handful of young adults who may make useful role models but are still growing in their understanding of what it means to be a lifelong follower of Jesus.

As we've delegated this important task of discipling the next generation to those not much older than them, we've created youth ministry silos in our churches that are high on enthusiasm and passion but sadly low on depth and substance.

As young people have exited these silos they have had little connection with the wider church and as such have too often drifted away.

The two extremes therefore are "no youth ministry" and "detached youth ministry". Neither approach is helpful nor fruitful.

So, what's the answer? How important is youth ministry and how should we approach it?

It's the conviction of CCCNZ that ministry that engages young people is an essential strategy if the church is to thrive on into the future. Effective organisations—be they businesses, clubs or even terrorist organisations—know that the future is secured by capturing the heart of the young.

It is our further conviction that such ministry is the responsibility, not just of the few, but of the whole church. What's needed is an integrated approach where a youth ministry exists but is well incorporated into the life of the wider church.

For this to happen churches need to invest well in young people, resourcing the ministry both financially and with people who not only love Jesus but also love young people and are willing to get involved in their lives.

These people need to be diverse, not only in personality but also in age. Each generation brings their own strengths



and when they are all present and working together we maximise the probability of producing mature disciples.

Among such people, spiritual depth and passion are essential but not entirely sufficient. These people need to be given the opportunity to be trained well in areas such as youth culture, adolescent development and effective leadership practice.

CCCNZ are committed to helping churches develop effective youth ministries because we are committed to seeing disciples made and leaders developed.

Do we have all the answers? No.

But we can help churches to find answers, tapping into the resources we provide or are aware of.

We're currently in the process of developing a national team of experienced youth workers who have a heart to work alongside all churches as they look to grow an effective and biblical youth ministry.

It's a costly undertaking but one we're convinced God is leading us into as we uncover youth pastors and key leaders who are excited about the vision and want to be part of it.

We pray that what you read in this edition of Rongopai enables you to catch some of this excitement: God is certainly at work!

If you need help to start a youth ministry or grow a youth ministry, contact me. I can assist you with this through our consultancy model, direct you to training opportunities and help find experienced people nearby to journey with you as you invest in the present and future Church.

Contact Murray: murraybrown@cccnz.nz

See more: www.cccnz.nz/page/youth





WORKING TOGETHER TO SEE YOUNG PEOPLE FLOURISH



SOPHIA SINCLAIR

CCCNZ COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER & RONGOPAI EDITOR

Our newsfeeds might be full of updates from Facebook friends and Instagram snaps, but a growing number of people report feeling disconnected from their real-life communities. In New Zealand our young people are particularly at risk: with high rates of suicide, mental illness and breakdown.

How great would it be if churches, schools and businesses were able to work together to ensure Kiwi young people flourished? It's been 20 years since Kiwi Duane Major had a vision which sought to answer this question.

24-7 YouthWork was born out of this desire to connect the different parts of his community to support young people, and today 24-7 YouthWork provides a robust, positive and working infrastructure to make this support a reality in hundreds of Kiwi schools.

The 24-7 YouthWork model sees faith-based youth workers go into secular high schools to work in partnership with teachers and the wider community for the good of young people. Today, over 100 churches (nine denominations) are working together to supply 180 youth workers to 71 local schools.

For many churches, taking part in 24-7 YouthWork provides a welcome introduction into the school community, where church-employed youth workers are able to devote a portion of their week to serving in the classroom or on the school yard.

Kiwi teachers are hard workers, but many lack resources or time to provide personalised pastoral care and follow up for each student. 24-7 YouthWork provides a way for the church to make their youth workers available to help out within the context of the school community and meet these needs in practical and tangible ways.

So what does a 24-7 YouthWorker actually DO?

Sometimes it's just about being present, building friendships and trust. Sometimes it's about being a support and an advocate for young people when no one else is available. Sometimes it's about building school spirit and encouraging a community to flourish.

In Spreydon, Christchurch, a 24-7 YouthWorker started a rugby club after seeing a need in the community. Over the years the club has grown and developed, and with that growth has come connection, honour and respect for the church community.

Hannah Munro is a youth worker at Chapel Hill Community Church and also works in her local high school with 24-7 YouthWork where she has opportunities to walk alongside students and to support teachers. "We started a girls' programme last year and I had really cool conversations around forgiveness, grace and what true love actually is—all in the context of their friendships and relationships."

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Hannah says the issues current students face are not all that different from when she was at high school, but a big factor is the role of social media: “It’s constant and it doesn’t go away at the end of the school day”. Teachers are often left dealing with the fall out—something that affects many of them emotionally. “We’ve put on morning teas and lunches for teachers to show our (24-7 YouthWorkers) support of what they do in classrooms. We also made up care packages to show practically that we appreciate their effort and dedication.”

Ashley Cooper works for Raleigh Street Christian Centre and is part of 24-7 YouthWork at Cambridge High School. She says it’s all about relationships: “It just takes time. It’s not a quick process, it’s just doing life with them, I had the opportunity to do the Tongariro crossing with a bunch of students and that time spent talking and walking was so important.”

How has the New Zealand community responded?

There are many communities around New Zealand that have benefited positively from 24-7 YouthWork partnerships

in schools. A research pilot from Canterbury University confirmed that positive youth development is facilitated by 24-7 YouthWork programmes “primarily through the *assets associated with the individual youth workers, the promotion of positive adult youth relationships, incorporating resources from the school and the community, opportunities for life skill development, and opportunities for self-determination or empowerment.*”

Why should your church consider a 24-7 YouthWork school partnership?

The hope, grace and truth of the gospel of Jesus compels Christians into radical community with God and with one another, and our churches have become places where we embrace intergenerational friendships, hospitality and mercy. But so often churches are failing to reach the wider community with these gifts.

“24-7 YouthWork provides a practical framework for partnering with schools and the community,” says 24-7 YouthWork Network Coordinator Jay Geldard, “often churches approach me saying: ‘we want to do this but we don’t know how, we’re not sure we have the capacity’ and I’m able to encourage them by offering a supportive infrastructure”. Jay has seen teams start small and grow: “as you get your hands and feet wet, things start bubbling and engaging”.

Instead of despairing quietly when you read troubling stats on the mental health of Kiwi young people, or wondering how to connect face-to-face in a digitally connected world, why not get in touch with Jay and chat about how your church could practically offer support to a local school through a 24-7 YouthWork partnership?



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Rongopai Editor Sophia Sinclair sat down with newbie youth pastors Selwyn Motu and Kopano Simanu at this year's Youth Summit to chat about their communities, their churches, and what God has been teaching them in their first few months serving in pastoral roles.

Selwyn Motu made the big shift back to the neighbourhood where he grew up earlier this year, and says he's felt God's calling as he's been welcomed into his new role as Youth Pastor at Tamaki Community Church: "there's been a lot of change in our wider Glen Innes community recently—with developers coming in and moving out people who've been here their whole lives, this has left the community really fragmented, broken and in shift.

"There have also been a number of youth suicides in the community in the last 12 months, and this has been really hard on the young people and their families, particularly for families in our church who knew these young people. It breaks my heart and I know it breaks God's heart.

"These unfortunate circumstances confirm for me the need for Jesus in this community and the reason I am called here to play my part to point the people towards Him, this is the right place, and I'm here at the right time—God's timing. I came to faith, received salvation, and got baptized at City Impact Church. It's a new environment at TCC and making the shift over in obedience—with lots of praying—I believe I am where God wants me."

"I am purely saved by the endless grace of God, in the past I've found myself at rock bottom and know what it's like. The community's hurting and there's pain and a need for change, and uncertainty in some areas—but I know my Lord can turn things around for His children."



Selwyn Motu

Selwyn says his first few months on the job have been about relationship, to meet the youth where they're at and share his experience and testimony of coming to faith: "I am purely saved by the endless grace of God, in the past I've found myself at rock bottom and know what it's like. The community's hurting and there's pain and a need for change, and uncertainty in some areas—but I know my Lord can turn things around for His children."

"There's a lot of love here at Tamaki Community Church. Our church has a really supportive older congregation. There's a few elderly that are there every Sunday morning faithful to this mighty house of God, there's no shortage of youth on our youth nights. At the moment we're trying to encourage our young people to come along on a Sunday and be part of the family in that way also. Our church also has a strong Samoan core that are regular and are at home. For me, as a Samoan, that attracted me a lot—to know that there were a lot of aunties and uncles here."

The highlight of the first few months has been forming relationships: "Meeting my kids, the team, the youth group kids are all at different points, they're under construction, and I can see God at work in each of them. Like a house that's under construction you can see the different points—breaking ground; putting up the frame; furnishing..."



Kopano Siman

there are a lot of youth in a variety of stages. I'm praying that God would help me love them to reach them as He wants me to."

"Everyone has been nothing but welcoming to me, I have been quite spoilt in the way they've looked after me and welcomed me."

What is Selwyn hoping and praying for his youth? "I'm asking God to show me what he wants me to do with this youth group and praying for his direction. I'm believing for a Holy Spirit revival, empowering everyone as they realise who they are in God, by the grace and work of Jesus."

Personal testimony has also been important for Kopano Simanu, who is the youth pastor at LifeChurch in Manurewa: "I was brought up in the Church and my grandfather was the minister of our church. I thought I was a Christian, but I just never knew who this Jesus really was. I used to just attend and thought that going to church made you a Christian, but I went to a friend's church and that's where I got saved."

"So, when I look at the kids I work with my experience is always in my mind: just because you're born into it doesn't mean you're saved, you've got to carry your own torch and know who Jesus is for yourself."

Addressing wider youth culture has also been a key part of the role: "Comparison is a big thing. The youth are always looking for people to emulate and follow and comparing

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themselves. For the guys it's someone like William Waiirua and for the girls the Kardashians—social media is a big thing. In my role I'm really trying to teach that you don't have to look like or act like someone else to be worthy; we're all wired different.

"Looking up to leaders is also a big cultural thing, and sometimes people think that because they're not the pastor there is no way to serve. I just try to get them to realise that God works with us and creates us with different gifts and abilities. We are all like body parts that work together. Just because you're not on the stage doesn't make you less of a body part—what you have we need. Trying to show them that we all have something to offer and they can be who God is calling them to be."

Mentoring from the wider pastoral team has been an important part of learning on the job. "My pastor is big on servant leadership, like Jesus washing his disciples' feet, there's a big culture of serving. It's been helpful to see that modelled and to think about how to model that for the youth—to encourage them to do the jobs that are hard work, and no-one sees."

Kopano's hopes and prayers for his youth group are, "that they would realise they are called to be game-changers for God, to be the influencers in whatever community they're part of. To empower our young people to realise they are not less of a Christian than someone preaching in the pulpit, and to know that God is calling people to be faithful Christians everywhere, in every job and vocation. "My youth need Jesus. He is the one they need to look like. Wherever they are they need to look like Jesus."



HOW A GAP YEAR MIGHT CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Taking a gap year: it's a Kiwi rite of passage that might seem indulgent or wasteful. But can a gap year be redeemed? Or is it all about selfish exploration and the refusal to grow up? Headspace is a gap year programme run by GC3 and provides young adults with an opportunity for growth and spiritual development.

For Melanie Crosbie (20), a gap year with Headspace in 2016 was the perfect opportunity to take a year out after completing high school to seriously consider her future and how her choices fit into God's big picture plan.

"I grew up in the South Waikato in a Christian family. We are the typical dairy farming family—I went to small town schools and enjoyed being part of a tight-knit church community.

"I was planning on studying Event Management at uni—I knew I'd be good at it, but I wasn't sure that I would enjoy it enough to spend money on a degree—so I thought, 'why not do Headspace for a year and decide afterwards'".

Headspace is a year-long (February-November) programme run by GC3 and is made up of five 'blocks'. This includes three month-long teaching blocks, a work experience block, and 10 weeks offshore in a global mission context.

"Just spending time with the leaders, interns and other gappers was one way that God used Headspace to really change me."

Melanie emphasises the transformative nature of the Headspace community:

"Just spending time with the leaders, interns and other gappers was one way that God used Headspace to really change me, I was surprised by how quickly we became a family. Living together for a year was formational, while you're living in community it becomes so natural and normal to talk about Jesus in everything. Those conversations helped build up my knowledge and my view of God. I found that I was learning through the example of others and their experiences as we prayed and shared life together."

"I remember getting to know refugees at a boarding school and initially feeling mad at God for their unfair life circumstances. But as I watched the students and saw their joy in God, despite their circumstances I realised that if they weren't mad, how could I be? It was humbling to see God's character outworked in the world and helped me to start thinking about how I can be part of His redemptive plan."

The teaching blocks feature helpful input from a variety of Christian teachers and include completing the 'Perspectives: On the World Christian Movement' course. Melanie says, "Perspectives was great learning for me—especially about how mission worked through the whole story of the Bible."

Melanie spent her work experience block with the team doing apple packing in Hastings and kiwifruit packing in Cambridge. This block is "where gap year meets real life. Gappers earn money, grow determination and endurance, as well as having the opportunity to practice outreach."

Gappers are well-prepared for the overseas portion of their year and spend time developing materials and learning about language and culture. Every year the gappers spend time in Thailand where Headspace has cultivated partnerships with local Christians and organisations.

Melanie's experience in Thailand gave tangible expression to her learning. During the 10 week block they visited Destiny Rescue, an organisation that rescues girls from the sex trade, as well as teaching at a school on the Burmese border where she met Karen people, many of whom had fled the dangerous environment of their homeland in Burma.

"It was during my time in Thailand that I really realised I had a passion for social justice. Growing up in church you hear God is the God of justice, but it hits home when you see it in a real-life situation. I remember getting to know refugees at a boarding school and initially feeling mad at God for their unfair life circumstances. But as I watched the students and saw their joy in God, despite their circumstances I realised that if they weren't mad, how could I be? It was humbling to see God's character outworked in the world and helped me to start thinking about how I can be part of His redemptive plan."

On returning to New Zealand Melanie began to think and pray: how does what I've learned fit into my life going forward? Her mentor (Headspace Youth Director, Charlie Shadbolt) suggested praying about studying social work, and when the final guest lecturer for the year pointed out that "you can learn skills, but you can't learn passion", Melanie knew she needed to change her plans to study Event Management.

"I'm now in the midst of studying social work here in New Zealand with the hope that I'll be able to use this to help refugees or internally displaced people in some way in the future. Through Headspace I'm still connected with some of our mission partners in Thailand and we've set up a way for ex-gappers to continue to give and make a difference to the special work they're doing over there.

"If you are just finishing school don't stress: you can change what you do, you can change your mind and that's OK. If you're feeling unsure then a year out helps give perspective. Headspace introduced me to new ideas and new experiences, but it really helped me to learn more about myself, God and who I am in God, and that's where all the change comes."

Story by Sophia Sinclair

If you or someone you know might be interested in Headspace in 2019 get in touch with Charlie Shadbolt: youthdirector@gc3.org.nz 027 372 9717, or visit www.gc3.org.nz/headspace

WHY YOUNG CHRISTIANS NEED THEOLOGY

CHRIS NORTHCOTT

LINCOLN ROAD BIBLE CHAPEL YOUTH PASTOR

During my late teens, when I was a new and young Christian, I was part of a weekly Bible study for young adults. The older woman who ran it had a verse that was an unofficial mission statement for us. It was a text that we returned to time and time again. Years later, I find myself sharing the same text with the young people under my watch. That verse is Daniel 11:32b: “The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.”

This highlights two crucial actions of the Christian life: standing firm in the faith and taking action to serve Jesus. It also gives us the means by which we can do these: Knowing God.

It should go without saying that theology is important for all Christians, but there is an urgency that is particular to young people. By definition they haven't had as much time to be rooted and built up in the faith (Col. 2:6-7). They are also more exposed to the deceptions of man-made ideologies (Col. 2:8) through social media and via secondary/tertiary education than the rest of us. Not to mention the simple temptations of the world that young people are more prone to: they may not yet have the wisdom or experience to decline the allures of parties and drugs and sex. Young people want to fit in with their peers, and their faith needs to be robust if it is going to be retained as a part of their identity.

“Standing firm” in the faith is something that is becoming increasingly difficult in New Zealand. Nothing about the Christian faith can be taken for granted anymore. Nothing is exempt from critical questioning. As our society drifts further from its Christian roots, those who choose not to drift with it face growing stigmatism for their stand. The contempt that Christianity faces from some quarters makes “standing firm” a daunting task, let alone actually standing up and opening one's mouth to “take action” as an active servant of Christ.

As a youth pastor, my education—and I include both my formal study and self-directed reading—has proven helpful here. There have been numerous times when young people have asked me about some challenge to their faith that they have encountered at school or elsewhere. It has been tremendously useful to be able to show them how I would tackle the problem. Even if I don't have answers



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immediately on hand, it is still reassuring for them to know that the challenge is not a new one and that there are answers that can be had and that a substantial response can in fact be made. Kids need to have someone they know they can bring the difficult questions to. I should add: academic study is useful, but it isn't everything. What counts is seeking to know God and love him with your mind. Reading good books will make up some of the lack in a formal education, or better yet, build on it. It is important to keep feeding your brain.



“It is increasingly recognised (and addressed) that the fun and games and excitement of youth ministry isn’t making real and lasting disciples. There’s nothing wrong with fun and games, but if our aim is to grow mature Christians, faith has to be given real substance.”

Here is what one of my Year 13 students has said about the importance of theology: “Theology is the difference between a vague, emotional quasi-spiritualism and an actual worldview. A solid foundational theology equips the young person to understand what they read in scripture, and make informed decisions based on their understanding of eternal truths. Theology helps us attempt to understand more of God and his ways... A shallow, weak theology will not hold up under pressure. A rich, well considered and solid theology will serve to strengthen faith.”

This is why theology is so important for young Christians. What they can learn will help them to weather the storms and even advance in them. They need to know

the encouragements of 1 Peter to stand strong, and the warnings of Hebrews to persevere. They need to know that God is the Creator of a good creation, but that his good creation has since become a ‘fallen’ creation. They need to know about the nonconformist Christians of Restoration England and how they remained faithful under pressure. They need to know why it isn’t stupid to believe that a good God and a suffering world can both exist. They need to know why certain actions people do are wrong, and how to both speak truth and show love to them as well. They need to know how to recognise what in our culture is inconsistent with biblical Christianity, and how to reach it with the gospel. Most of all they need to know Jesus. This is theology—God and his gospel. The study of Scripture, doctrine, history, apologetics, ethics, missiology and more, all conscripted to the service of a living faith in the living God.

It is increasingly recognised (and addressed) that the fun and games and excitement of youth ministry isn’t making real and lasting disciples. There’s nothing wrong with fun and games, but if our aim is to grow mature Christians, faith has to be given real substance. This may prove challenging to put into action, but I would like to challenge you to find a way. A lot depends on it. The strength to refuse honour to the cultural idols of our day will come from having a clear vision of a bigger God. The courage to defy these idols will be drawn from a zealous faith fuelled by robust and awe-inspiring eternal truths. For the honour of Christ and the good of his people in the coming generation, do find a way.

YOUR CHURCH NEEDS YOU!



Rongopai Editor Sophia Sinclair caught up with Nina and Josh Paget, youth group coordinators at Clark Road Chapel in Whangarei. Nina and Josh are voluntary workers who have been leading the group for 10 years and bring much-needed insight into how our churches can encourage and support unpaid volunteers.

How long have you guys been at Clark Road and what keeps you busy during the week?

Nina has family at Clark Road Chapel (CRC) and has been coming along ever since her youth group leader challenged her to come back to God and the CRC family: praise the Lord for youth group leaders who tell it like it is! Before CRC, Josh was at Fenton Park Bible Church where he was involved in the youth group there. We've been fellowshiping at CRC for more than 10 years now as a married couple.

We met in 2005 while on a mission trip to the Philippines with Word of Life. We didn't do the "take a break from ministry" thing when we got married, we just loved what we were doing and knew God had equipped us to carry on.

Over our time as youth leaders Josh has changed careers from being a builder to a policeman and volunteered for multiple youth work programs when he could. Nina has always been involved in youth work, both in paid and voluntary capacities. Whether teaching sexual health in high schools, working with young offenders, or working as a foster carer.

These days we have a little toddler, Beau, who keeps us busy during the day. During the evenings we love to fill our

tanks with fellowship and ministry. We both love to be with people, but we know our limits. Nina learnt the hard way with a confronting and very hard journey through burnout, and Josh particularly needs alone time. So, learning about each other's personalities early on was vital to realising what we could and couldn't do as a couple in ministry.

What prompted you both to start working with young people at Clark Road? How did it all come about?

We have followed in the footsteps of a team of people who have seen the need and filled the gaps. Young people are in such a turbulent time at that stage of life and they need adults (in cohesion with their parents) to come alongside them.

We've gone through years of very minimal team members, to years with interns and large numbers within the leadership team. But there has been an amazing heritage at CRC of faithful, committed leaders who have been prioritising the Bible study aspect for a long time. We have been extremely blessed to carry on some of those key, non-negotiable ideas of digging into the Word first and foremost.

How have you see God at work in your youth?

We've had mixed feelings. It's hard not to be discouraged by those not walking with the Lord anymore, but we are reminded that God is good and his timing is perfect. We don't always know the full picture. The longer you stick in youth ministry, the more cyclical you realise it is.

One of the highlights has been the shift in thinking amongst youth who now see gap years or Christian vocation opportunities such as Headspace, Word of Life internships, or Pathways as viable options after finishing high school. This is encouraging as we see their worldview shift.

There was also a time where Whangarei experienced a huge, devastating trend in copycat teen suicides. CRCYOUTH had an extreme increase in numbers during this time and we were so encouraged by the way our church members rallied together.

Are there unique challenges to volunteering in this role? What about positives?

It's hard not to look around and think "if only we had their resources, their time, their..." But we know that type of thinking is a trap. Each church has different challenges, whether roles are paid or not.

“If everybody volunteered just an hour of their time weekly to a ministry in their local church, things would look extremely different. Everyone is part of the body of Christ and has something to offer.”

This season of volunteering has taught us so much. Yes, the challenges have been balancing our time, energy and priorities. But volunteering has taught us much more about giving, personal capacity, self-sacrifice, God’s empowerment and doing what you do out of the love you have for the Lord.

As a volunteer, there is often a sense of isolation, lack of support and differing expectations if you’re not “on staff”. There are no meetings or team collaboration, no work computers/desks and sometimes a lack of professional development. If this isolated feeling is paired with negative thoughts it can be a slippery slope. It’s so important to combat this and actively redirect yourself.

We try to constantly remind ourselves to serve the Lord out of love, fear and reverence because it’s a command of our growing faith, not because we want a “role”. Matthew reminds us to seek God’s kingdom first. Romans urges us to keep our zealous spirit, to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer. Whether a volunteer or in paid work, those remain the same.

In what ways can churches support people working in unpaid ministry roles?

CRC is a fantastic congregation of people who value youth work. That is represented in the way the church prioritises the youth group in the annual budget, the constant inclusion of youth in different church ministries, the support shown during fundraising times and the adults who get involved in what the youth group does.

We’ve been blessed with a variety of support from people who jump on board camps/trips, those who bake for supper or events, and several people who pray specifically for individual young people in our group. That’s huge!

As coordinators we’ve really valued simple things such as a card with encouragement, or a coffee and prayer time.



Training and networking opportunities are re-fuelling as well, but those can be tricky to attend when you’re a volunteer who can’t take time off during the week.

It’s also really encouraging to have an elder come alongside you regularly to outwork the need for supervision, prayer and to hear what’s happening in the ministry. A lot can change in a ministry month to month, so meeting regularly is important.

Any words of encouragement for people who might see a need in their own churches but feel hesitant about responding?

Your church needs you.

If everybody volunteered just an hour of their time weekly to a ministry in their local church, things would look extremely different. Everyone is part of the body of Christ and has something to offer.

1 Peter 4 tells us to use our gifts to serve one another and to be faithful stewards of God’s grace. Galatians calls us to use our God-given freedom to serve.

Can you write cards of encouragement? Fold newsletters? Vacuum? Run a website? Bake bickies? Pray for a group of teens? Teach a Bible lesson to under 5s? Pour tea for the seniors? Everyone has something to offer.

Sometimes it also requires us to humbly put aside our views and goals and get amongst something that is already functioning but needs more support. Don’t be afraid to talk to your elders and find out the needs and where you can help. Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

REINVIGORATING RALLY



“I stood up on Sunday and shared my dream of re-starting Rally at our church, Rutland Street. By the end of the Sunday I had eight leaders and by the end of the week I had \$2000 to get started.”

Tony Foster is Youth Director at Rutland Street Church in Christchurch, and dad to three boys. 12 years ago Tony, and his wife Angela, started thinking about how great it would be if they could find a Rally for their boys to get involved with, but thinking it wouldn't happen he pushed the idea aside.

Then God prompted them again: they heard speaker Graham Ashby talk about the significance of Rally in his own life and Tony decided it was time to act: “I went to the elders to say ‘this is where I'm at, what do I do?’ and they encouraged me to get up and put it to the church, so I did.”

“Looking back at it, it was God's timing. There were leaders who desired to see something happen and to be involved, but they weren't in a position to head it up. And because I was willing to put my hand up and jump in there it went from there.”

There were 20 kids (boys and girls, as they run Rally mixed) on the first night, and it grew from there. 12 years on they are steady at 45-50 kids every session. There's a mix of church families, their non-churched friends and community families. At least three quarters are church-based kids or connected via the church. Recently, the church has been taking the opportunity to go into their local primary school to run breakfasts: “We've made an effort to connect Rally

and breakfast club, with our leaders and Rally families intentionally connecting with the community. As a result, our bring-a-friend nights at Rally can grow to up to 73 kids!”

What happens at Rally these days?

At the time Rutland Street Church re-launched their group, the Rally Council was urging groups to bring their own unique flavour and customise the program to suit their context: “We still carry parade, we still do games and badges, but every night we meet we always open the Bible, our devotion time has been really significant for us—it's one of the core things for us that we've stuck to”.

Tony says Rally has fed back into the wider youth and children's ministry of the church in positive ways. “We don't just have the kids attend Rally, as they come along they have responsibilities and the opportunity to grow as leaders. The devotions are the biggest responsibility and there's an element of discipleship which develops that.

“One thing that the cadets (a trainee leadership position) first learn how to do is to teach the kids memory verses. The Bible is a central part of what we do.

“We've also had kids go through Rally to youth group then on to Pathways, Headspace or Word of Life—it's been really encouraging seeing that transition and development of leadership in the church. I did a count a year ago and about 50 percent have come through Rally into youth group and church, so the discipleship work is definitely evident.”

“Every night we meet we always open the Bible, our devotion time has been really significant for us—it's one of the core things for us that we've stuck to.”



Tony Foster

Tony believes that starting early and focusing on kids programmes helps develop youth and young people: “If we can equip them and get them established in their faith early on then we can hand them on to their youth groups in a place where God can use them powerfully as young people at high school.”

The generational fruit of Rally

Denis Wallace is from the NZ Rally Council and says the fruit of Rally in New Zealand can be seen in all generations, “Several of the eldership at our church were Rally kids and it had a profound impact”.

Rally Council provides practical and spiritual support for Rallies. From ideas and guidance on games and badges, to leadership courses and ongoing training. And Denis says things are growing, “I think there’s actually an upturn at the moment, we’re even considering employing someone fulltime to support the churches that want to start a rally and encourage existing Rallies. Years ago, things used to be all about the uniform and parades—but things have changed a bit now and each group has the flexibility to work on a structure which will best serve that community.”

Meeting the community’s needs

Tony believes our churches have something special to offer, and that Rally provides a framework for community engagement.

“Our communities need structure for our kids; the discipline of a parade; the relationships and respect given and received; opportunities to learn God-centered life skills.

“To have leaders who love them and are having fun with them is something they may not have, and if we can provide that then society’s going to want it. There’s a real need for kids to have positive role models.

“Rally provides an opportunity for churches to be unapologetically Christian, to stay true to the Word and show their communities the truth, as well as providing for a need in society. If we can love these kids and give them some God-centered structure in their lives I think we’re going to set our communities up well.”

Interested in getting a Rally started in your church?

For Tony, following God’s lead was the key thing: “the core of it for me was that I had to listen to God and follow the direction he wanted me to go. To be obedient and trust in his time and his place, and I think that’s why we’ve seen Rally become such a key part of the life of Rutland Street Church.”

NZ Rally is an international organisation that began in New Zealand and is a club for all boys and girls aged 7-16 years. NZ Rally will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its inception in 2019. Visit www.nzrally.org.nz for more information. Denis and the team would love to support you in starting a group at your church.

Story by Sophia Sinclair

GOD QUALIFIES THOSE HE CALLS

In 2016 Mihiwai and Renata Te Aho decided to approach the assembly and elders about running a youth night at Tauwhare Gospel Chapel.

Mihiwai and I have lived at Tauwhare Marae for 32 years. We have four sons and six grandchildren. Mihiwai and I fellowship at the Tauwhare Gospel Chapel which is located at Tauwhare Marae.

Both Mihiwai and I believe God has called us to do his work to help our youth get to know about Jesus, for it was when we were young that we too heard about Jesus at youth nights on Tauwhare Marae.

We both work full time in our respective jobs. Mihiwai teaches at the local kura-ā-iwi, Te Kura ō Ngāti Hauā. I work as a Line Mechanic for WEL Services in the power industry. So, our lives are full on. We are not qualified youth pastors or pastors, but we believe God will help us do his work and he will qualify us in our journey for him.

Our local assembly is very supportive in prayers and we thank CCCNZ Regional Enabler brother Nick Goodwin for the encouragement and support he has given us. We are always thankful for whatever resources we can access and are always grateful for continued help in discipling.

We have about 24 youth in our community, aged from 10 years to 15 years, 14 of whom attend regularly.

“We are not qualified youth pastors or pastors, but we believe God will help us do his work and he will qualify us in our journey for him.”

Our night begins with karakia first, which teaches the youth to put Christ first. We then open the Bible and learn from the Word of God. It could be to read about certain passages of Scripture, or to answer some questions that the youth have asked from the last youth night and or it may be homework that has been set about a certain passage of Scripture that we have read. We then have a karakia for kai and have something to eat and drink, followed by a chill out time to play games, play table tennis, play the ukulele, guitar or drum, or just to korero. We then finish with waiata: singing choruses and hymns praising the Lord. They love singing to the Lord.

As a word of encouragement to those who may be thinking about doing something similar, God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the CALLED.



YOUTH SUMMIT

MAY 14-16 2018, TOTARA SPRINGS, WAIKATO

Our first ever Youth Summit was held to gather key youth leaders and youth pastors from around New Zealand. We spent time sharing and talking about how our movement's youth leaders can be working together to encourage one another and serve God. CCCNZ is committed to investing significant time and resources to see the people, organisations and activities amongst our youth flourish, and the CCCNZ Youth Summit is the first critical step in making this possible.



WORD OF LIFE

Word of Life New Zealand started in 1984 with a camp and Bible college in Nelson and is now a nationwide ministry based in Hamilton. Every aspect of Word of Life's ministry is founded on biblical principles and teaching.

Word of Life runs outreach and leadership training events all around New Zealand, including Outreach Tournaments—a way for your youth group to invite their friends to a sports tournament where they can have a great time and hear a clear presentation of the gospel. Similarly, their annual camp over Labour Weekend in the Waikato is a crazy weekend of fun where youth also hear the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

With over 30 years of working with youth ministries in New Zealand, Word of Life desires to grow and encourage youth leaders by running leadership development courses—both within individual churches and regionally.

Every year Word of Life runs Youth Reachout, a mission trip overseas where youth get the opportunity to share Jesus, but also learn life lessons from the Bible.

For more info on Word of Life and upcoming events visit www.wol.org.nz or contact the Word of Life office: office@wol.org.nz

LEARN WHERE YOU LIKE

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