

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Rongopai

Light in the darkness my God that is
who You are

CONNECTION

Connecting churches and camps

Staying connected during delta

Strengthening regional connections



VOLUME 14

Rongopai is the magazine of the Christian Community Churches of New Zealand Trust.

www.cccnz.nz

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Youth celebrating Easter Sunday
at the inaugural CCCNZ North
Island Easter Camp 2021

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contact sophiasinclair@cccnz.nz**



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SEVEN REMINDERS FROM EPHESIANS

“This Rongopai is a quiet reminder that God is at work in the connections and community of our movement of churches, campsites, and support ministries.”





MARK GRACE
CCCNZ AMBASSADOR

1: The COVID situation is pressing and stressful, but it's not central

In Ephesians Paul names his imprisonment twice—it's significant, but it's never central.

Christ. His gospel. His Church. These are central.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the government's public health response, have become increasingly significant, but they are not central.

2: Our goal hasn't changed

The beating heart of Ephesians 1 is God's grace to us in Jesus and his death and resurrection. Paul marvels at what God does to us and in us, through our hearing and responding to the message of the cross. What a powerful reminder. Our gospel heartbeat as Christians remains consistent in a year that has been anything but!

I'm encouraged to hear this gospel heartbeat beating in church and camp partnerships, in the partnership between Word of Life and local churches, in friendships, in regional ministry connections, and in Easter Camps as people share this good news with others.

Our goal remains unchanged: to work together to reach New Zealand for Jesus Christ.

3: Our connection with each other hasn't been cancelled

Paul's in prison in Rome, with 1800km separating him from the believers in Ephesus.

Connections are hard but they aren't cancelled.

Over the year, as fatigue has increased, connections with brothers and sisters feel harder but they aren't cancelled. This edition of Rongopai is filled with stories about connections being made between leaders, churches, campsites, and ministries for the cause of the gospel. It's so deeply encouraging.

4: Emphasise regional

In Ephesians chapter 1 Paul affirms the Ephesians' love for one another—love across what was likely to be a movement of Christians meeting in house churches within a city. In chapters 3-6 he specifically encourages

them to live as Christ's people in the context where God has placed them, knowing they face their own unique struggles and joys.

I'm constantly encouraged hearing of the support, encouragement, and partnership shared among CCCNZ churches in regions: churches gathering together for prayer, elderships meeting up, and churches partnering in supporting revitalisation and church planting work.

5: Trials remind us of what matters

Imprisonment is dangerous. It's difficult living and working in Ephesus. In Ephesians both situations are presented as opportunities to be the body of Christ. Both invite believers to be living out the gospel of Christ amongst each other. Both call believers to gospel witness.

What opportunities are before you in the midst of the pandemic? What is God calling you to do as you live out the gospel of Christ as a witness to what God has done?

6: God is at work

Ephesians 1 is an incredible insight into our extraordinary God working in ordinary churches.

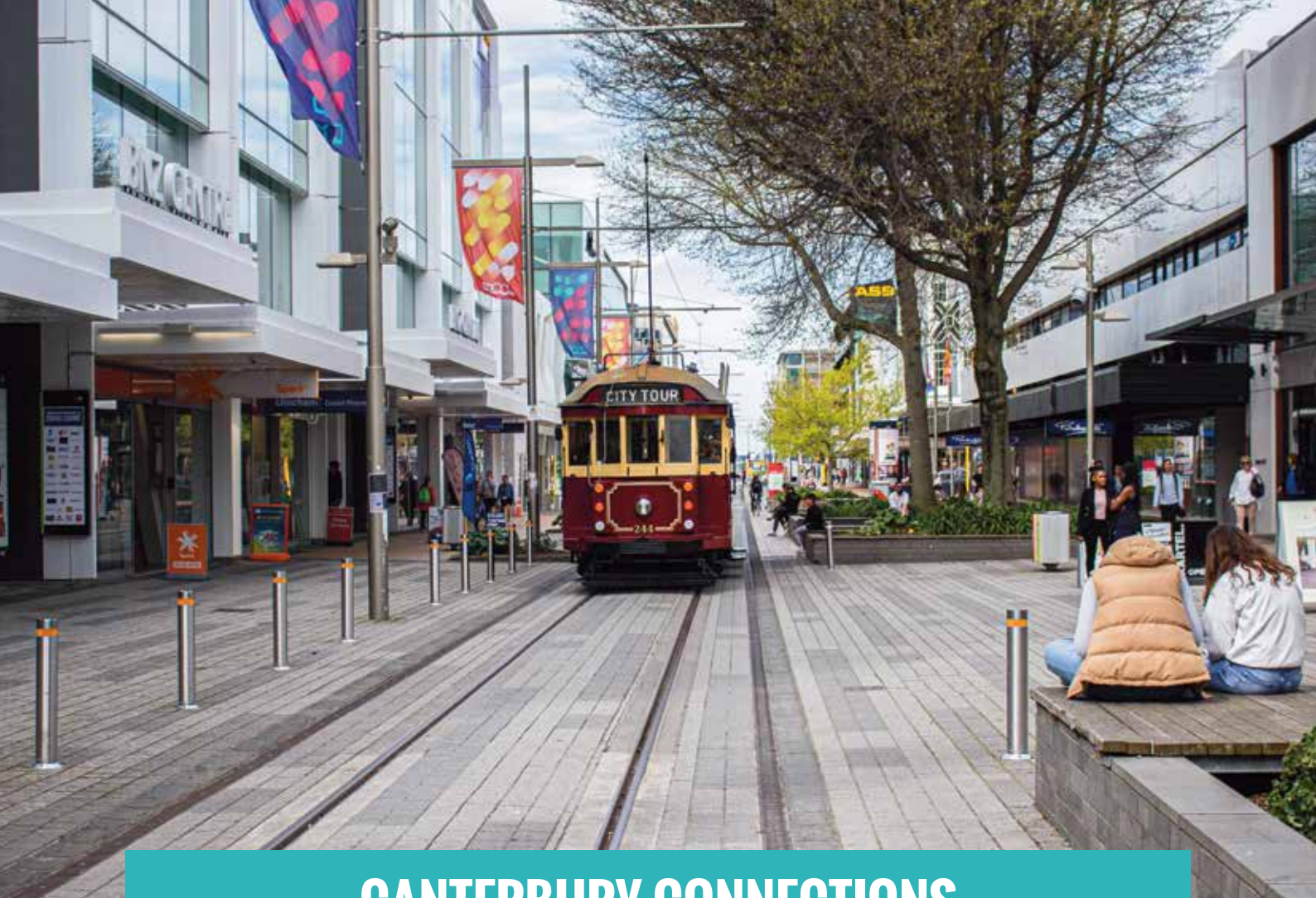
The triune God is at work in, through, and amongst ordinary groups of believers. It's true in Ephesus and it's true in Eketāhuna: God is at work in global history and New Zealand history.

This Rongopai is a quiet reminder that God is at work in the connections and community of our movement of churches, campsites, and support ministries.

7: You are part of a wider movement of churches, campsites, and ministries

In Ephesians 1 Paul reminds people that they are not alone. God is intimately involved in them and with them.

Secondly, he reminds them that they have each other. Can I encourage you to remember that you are not alone. You are part of a wider movement of local churches, regional campsites, and national ministries. You can take the gospel out where you are, with what you have, to those who are in front of you.



CANTERBURY CONNECTIONS



SOPHIA SINCLAIR
RONGOPAI EDITOR & CCCNZ COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

“Connections between people and churches really started gaining traction last year—ironic given 2020 was a year where we experienced increased restrictions because of COVID-19!”

Lawson Scott has served as the CCCNZ Canterbury Regional Enabler since 2016, a voluntary role where he seeks to encourage connection among Open Brethren heritage and independent churches, campsites, and support ministries in Canterbury.

“We’re all fiercely independent, we look different and feel different as churches, but we’re united in working together for a common cause: seeing people in Canterbury hear about and know Jesus as their saviour and growing to love, and serve, like him”.

Practically this ‘working together’ takes a variety of forms. From regional eldership retreats to prayer gatherings, combined youth leadership training

events, even discussions about church life amid COVID restrictions:

“We had churches without capability to live stream joining live streams of services from other local CCCNZ churches during lockdown, and discussions among leaders like ‘How are you doing communion within restrictions?’ It has been great to share and learn from each other”.

Church planting and revitalisation is also a key area where people from the region have been working together. Leaders from three CCCNZ churches (Rutland Street Church, Riccarton Community Church and Bryndwr Chapel) have recently formed a reference board to support a church plant in Lincoln (a town in the Selwyn District, on the outskirts of Christchurch). Two churches—Rowley Bible Church and Bryndwr Chapel—have been talking about how they could be

“We’re all fiercely independent, we look different and feel different as churches, but we’re united in working together for a common cause.”

working together to meet ministry needs and revitalising ministry in their community.

The team has grown too—with NZ Rally Coordinator Tony Foster (Rutland Street Church) and CCCNZ Regional Youth Enabler Matt Meek (Riccarton Community Church) playing key roles in strengthening connections.

As churches face an increasingly difficult legal, logistical, and spiritual climate, there is a growing sense of the need to work together, says Lawson: “Isolation becomes problematic, as you realise the need to support, but also input and advice”.

It is worth pointing out that this enthusiasm for working together has grown over the past five years, and it has developed with relational connections.

“It was a slow start,” says Lawson, “but I believed in what CCCNZ was hoping to achieve, and I focused on establishing a coalition of the willing—I found people who ‘got it’ and we went from there. Over time that group has grown as people have started to see the positives in connecting and working together”.

People have come forward to work together, “one of the most encouraging things is seeing people work together as a team,” says Lawson, “people have picked up responsibilities and are taking the lead on connecting with others”.

Geoff Stark from Westchurch recently took on organising the latest Canterbury Prayer Gathering, along with other leaders, where people from different churches came together to pray for their region. He says it was a real encouragement to see the diversity of churches represented: “I looked around and thought how different each church represented is, and yet we were able to come together and pray—which is so important at a time like this. Our unity in desire to see the gospel go out was really profound”.

Churches in Canterbury have also been strengthening their relationships, as they work together to reach their community. Both Rutland Street Church and Westchurch run CAP debt centres, seeking to lift the burden of physical debt and at the same time being



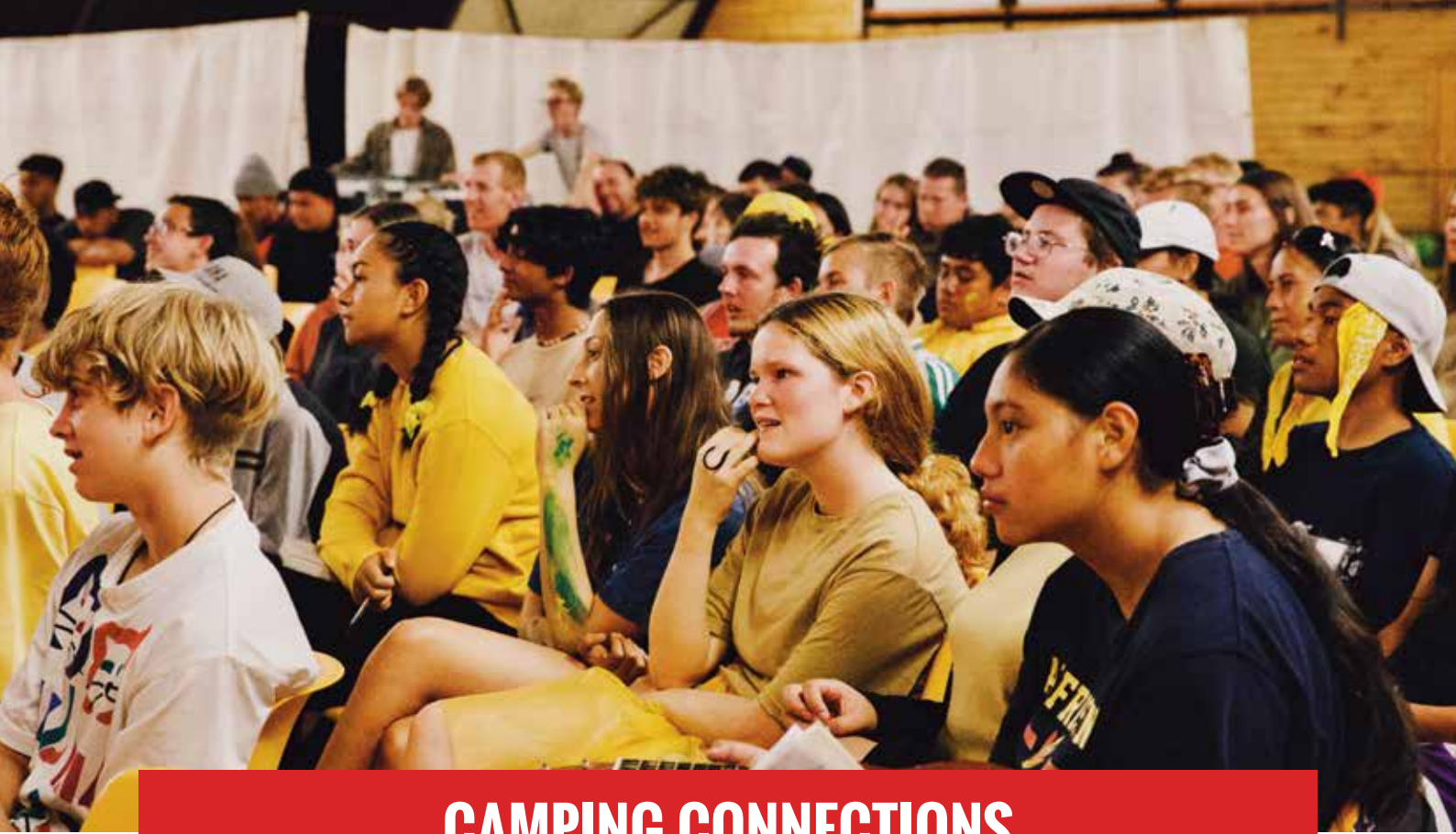
CCCNZ Canterbury Regional Prayer Gathering

open talk to people about spiritual burdens. “It has been good working together with members of Rutland Street to assist people in need,” says Geoff.

CCCNZ Ambassador Mark Grace says the connections established across the Canterbury region are particularly encouraging:

“We’ve seen a real commitment to personal connection and relationship growing in Canterbury. It’s worth highlighting that this growth has happened at a local level. It hasn’t been the CCCNZ staff team driving these connections from afar, but instead offering support when requested. We’re praying we’ll see something similar develop in many different regions across Aotearoa, New Zealand”.

The pressure of navigating ministry in the next few months and years of the pandemic rests heavily on many leaders. Why not reach out to other CCCNZ churches and leaders in your region to offer support and encourage one another? If you’re not sure where to go or who to connect with, check out our list of Regional Enablers on the final page of this issue, or visit our website. You’ll find lists and contacts for linked in churches, and for our regional enablers: www.cccnz.nz



CAMPING CONNECTIONS



MARYANNE SPURDLE
RONGOPAI WRITER

“When was the last time you had four or five people in your church, in one morning, say, ‘I want to become a Christian?’” That’s a normal day at Teapot Valley Christian Camp—seeing four or five youth taking the next step towards faith in Jesus.

As CCCNZ’s Camping Enabler, Richard Davis has plenty of opportunities to say what he’s been asking for some time: “That’s the opportunity before us; don’t you want to be part of it?”

In Nelson, leaders from the trustee churches that originally founded Teapot Valley have been asking themselves the same thing over recent years. They’ve found an ally in the camp’s manager, Paul Shutte.

Paul has managed Teapot Valley with his wife, Jocelyn, for the past 26 years. He said that in the early days, the churches had a much closer relationship with the camp. They participated in working bees on the site 25 minutes south of Nelson, helped with operations, and were the main source of campers.

“Over the past few years we’ve recognised that, unintentionally, we’ve drifted apart,” Paul says. “Now we’re starting to work out what more intentionally we can do

to prevent that drift”. The drift is a national trend that many Open Brethren heritage camps are experiencing, and various currents are driving it.

Camps used to be places for youth to connect, be disciplined, and invite friends into the church community; now church-based youth groups are typically the hub for those activities.

Family life has also changed. Murray Gauntlett remembers helping his father do building work at Tōtara Springs in the 1970s and spending many holidays and weekends at Christian camps. “We did very little other things when we were kids,” says the elder at Grace Church Richmond and trustee for Teapot Valley. “Our parents were involved in the church and involved in the camp, and that was a major thing. ... The way that we live now, we go away often, we do a lot more travel than we used to do, and you’ve only got a certain amount of spare time”.

“Twenty-five years ago, the majority of weekends would be churches,” Paul says of Teapot Valley’s clientele. “Now, we might have three or four weekends a year”. He says that in addition to fragmented

calendars, rising costs and work commitments have contributed to the drift.

As churches have become more independent from camps, camps have hired people for roles once filled by volunteers and opened their doors to groups besides churches and schools. “We’ve had to diversify a little bit, and I guess within that the ministry component of what we do has changed,” Paul says. He says that they focus on serving their guests well, and take opportunities where they can to share the camp’s Christian foundation—a shift that offers new opportunities.

Earlier this year a group of Teapot Valley trustees, elders from three different churches in the Nelson region, and CCCNZ staff met together to talk about how they could be working together more intentionally. “To see the desire from a number of key people to make this work—and it will be a long journey, it’s a marathon, not a sprint—I’m so excited to see what can happen. It’s a template for what can happen through our nation,” says Richard.

To help draw churches and Teapot Valley together, Paul and his team plan to run subsidised camps for partner churches. They’ll also run kids’ programmes geared to non-churched friends, which also allows the adults to meet together. He says there are plenty of opportunities for camps to work with church pastors, small groups, staff, retreats and conferences.

Richard, who is also on the board of Christian Camping New Zealand, says that there are just shy of 70 Christian camps in the country. Nearly a third have an Open Brethren heritage, and each year more than 100,000 people attend a camp associated with CCCNZ. Tōtara Springs alone sees more than 15,000 campers a year. “Every single one of those people is an opportunity for Jesus,” Richard says.

The leaders at Teapot Valley, Grace Church, Hope Community Church, and Tasman Church are pursuing a closer relationship not just because the churches were historically invested in the camp, but because they see great opportunities for both the campsite and their churches.

“We really do need each other to fulfil our gospel mission in Nelson,” says Sean Young from Grace Church. He knows first-hand the role camps play in bringing young people to faith, and the importance of churches to disciple them. “I came to the Lord in a marquee on the grounds of Teapot Valley Camp back in 1997,” he says. “The camp has a place close to my heart”.

Over recent years, Grace Church has seen at least four young people who aren’t from Christian homes join

the youth group. Sean says they became Christians at camp and, thanks to his church’s involvement there, found a community of believers.

Camps also provide ample opportunities for leadership development, both in service to others and in discipleship.

“We’ve had a lot of our youth at camp either as a leader-in-training or as leaders,” Sean says. Over the winter holidays, about 50 youth from Grace spent time at Teapot Valley. “They’ll give up their entire holidays to be out there, which is outstanding”.

He’s seen a good flow-on effect. “It’s nice to see young people who want to serve others... It’s not easy for them. In fact the camps are getting more and more challenging with some of the issues and behaviour and background that they are having to deal with”.

Through these challenges, Sean said the youth have grown.

“It has been awesome to hear some of the stories from my leaders when they come back,” he says. “It has been a positive for us, a real positive”.

At Teapot Valley, Paul says that they’re actively training young people from the three connected churches to be camp leaders. Most of the camp’s speakers are youth leaders from those churches, and there are plenty of opportunities for youth to grow their leadership skills.

Those experiences strengthen leadership within local youth groups, Paul said, and ultimately that strengthens the entire church.

This is one of the main reasons that Richard is so passionate about his role.

“A camp and a church together to train our next generation—it’s hugely important,” he says. “And that’s only going to happen if the church management and camp management get into the same room and start slowly—and it will be slowly—put processes in place for this generation to be growing in God’s word and for evangelism opportunities”.

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CONNECTING TO SUPPORT OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

Word of Life NZ's Youth Reachout typically takes place in Fiji and Samoa. It's a three week trip focusing on evangelism and personal development in a cross-cultural context.

But with COVID-19 putting a stop to overseas travel in 2021, it became Youth Reachout Roadtrip.

During the July school holidays a team of 20 people (Word of Life staff, their families, and young people) traveled around New Zealand to partner with different churches in hosting evangelistic community events.

"It was really special for us to be in New Zealand," says Word of Life's Field Coordinator Dave Gow. "For us, it made sense to use this opportunity partner with local churches to evangelise and disciple local youth".

"With 50 percent of the churches we visited we were supporting work they were already doing in the local community—what we were able to offer was an exciting and new event. The remaining 50 percent of churches wanted our help to support them in stepping

out in new ways into their community. In both cases we were able to provide logistical support to run a community event, people trained to share the gospel with kids, and practical experience in reaching out".

Manawarū Bible Chapel is based in a rural farming town in Waikato, pastor Justin Thompson says that partnering with Word of Life on the event was an exciting opportunity to grow connection with their local community:

"A small, rural community like ours can often lack the resources to host a large evangelistic event like this one. Sharing pictures of the bouncy castles and activities was great for advertising and bringing the community in. We had people come from Te Aroha and Matamata, and lots of kids who were staying with grandparents for the school holidays. It was great to have the support of the Word of Life team in set up, sort out the food, supervise games and activities and share the gospel".

Manawarū used the opportunity to bless their local primary school, building on relationships they had already established:

“We’ve got a really good relationship with the school, so when I chatted with the principal about using the event as a fundraising opportunity for the school, they were very supportive,” says Justin, “the key benefit of the event was making more connections with families we’ve never met before. More than half of the kids who attended were unknown. We had people asking about youth group, kids ministries, and other ways they could connect with what our church is already doing in the community”.

Rutland Street Church in Christchurch was keen to use the Youth Reachout Roadtrip as an opportunity to try a new way of connecting with families in their local community. Youth Director and NZ Rally Facilitator Tony Foster says he was keen to see how a holiday program might encourage connection with the Rutland Street Rally:

“We had 38 children and 15 of them were ‘newbies’. There were a few mums, dads, grandparents and an aunty who unexpectedly stayed for the event which brought us a great opportunity to connect with them too. We were very encouraged by it all”.

Tony says their experience revealed how important it is for church families to be developing relationships with community families, “The majority of the new children came because friends invited them. It confirmed to me that friends being invited is a great avenue to reach into our communities”.

Youth Reachout Roadtrip also plays an important role in encouraging the faith of the teens and young people who take part in the trip. They spend time training in how to share testimonies, and work on skits and gospel presentations together.

Sharing the gospel with kids was a highlight for Aimee Clemow, “They are so open and loving so it was a real



joy to be able to share the good news with them”. Aimee also found the spiritual development aspect of the roadtrip really beneficial:

“In my own life God really highlighted things I didn’t even know were an issue. I realised how I need to surrender everything to God and it was an amazing time of restoration and a fresh start. I have definitely seen a difference in my quiet times and the areas I was challenged in”.

Youth Reachout Roadtrip is back on again in 2022, around New Zealand during the Easter School Holidays 10–29 April.

Visit www.wol.org.nz/youth-reachout/ for more info.

Story by Sophia Sinclair

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CONNECTING WITH OTHERS IN YOUR REGION

It's isolating work.

That's a surprising fact for those of us who see children's ministry workers constantly connecting with the most energetic and open members of our churches. But many in those roles regularly describe it that way—isolating.

Ten years ago, while working as Children and Families Pastor at Hillcrest Chapel, Julie McKinnon joined a 'cluster' meeting for other Waikato-based children's ministry leaders set up by Karen Warner, who was leading the Baptist Union's Children and Youth Ministries at the time. "The group was a God-send," says Julie, "I found support and connection".

Regional Connections

The cluster operates as a regional meeting for people in similar ministry roles—to meet for support, friendship, and collaboration.

Ten years later, now as CCCNZ's Children and Family Ministries Enabler, Julie credits the connections made through those quarterly gatherings with expanding her view of children's ministry and giving her practical guidance.

That same Waikato group now plays a key role in connecting Children and Family leaders across CCCNZ churches in Waikato.

“For many, these groups are a reminder that they are not alone in gospel ministry or the feeling of being isolated. Connecting with others in similar roles provides people with a place to share ideas, pray, and face the challenges of ministry together.”

They meet just six times a year and for a couple of hours—often enough to build relationships, but not so frequently that attendance is a burden. A typical gathering would be 6 or 7 people from across the Waikato and it has been growing.

Rach Dixon is the current Children and Families Pastor at Hillcrest Chapel. The former teacher and mum of two joined Julie at the cluster when she began the role. Rach is used to working with children, but the ministry role has had its own learning curve.

“Support and encouragement in the role is pretty important,” she says. “It’s also quite challenging, in a good way, hearing what other people are doing and thinking, ‘I could do that better,’ or sharing new ideas and ways of doing things. And it’s good to pray together and get to know one another”.

National Connections

Through last year’s lockdowns, Julie hosted a weekly Zoom chat for children and family ministries leaders nationwide. This now continues on a monthly basis, allowing those in the Waikato cluster to talk and pray with colleagues from CCCNZ churches across Aotearoa, New Zealand.

“At Ministry Summit in May 2021, it was so good because we finally got to meet people in person who we’d been chatting to online for ages”, Rach says. “You feel like you know them; meeting in person was a real highlight”.

JonJon Ruakere, the Children’s Pastor at Agora Church in Hamilton (formerly called City Bible Church), is also a regular at the Zoom sessions and cluster meetings.

“It’s really good to be with likeminded people,” he says. Support and prayer are key reasons he attends as well.

Discussions cover everything from how to recruit and train volunteers, using specific resources, or how to

encourage parental involvement. The challenges children and families workers face are as varied as the people they minister to.

Keen to meet others in ministry roles from your region?

How could others replicate the Waikato cluster, whether they have children’s ministry or some other leadership role in common?

Julie’s one word of advice is to have a focus for the meeting, with someone taking the initiative to ensure there’s helpful content and the time doesn’t focus only on the hard parts of ministry. The Waikato group spends some time sharing together and some time in teaching and discussion—“But that’s just how ours works,” Julie says. ‘It doesn’t mean that’s how they have to work”.

The main benefit highlighted by people who regularly meet in regional groups is peer support and encouragement. For many, these groups are a reminder that they are not alone in gospel ministry or the feeling of being isolated. Connecting with others in similar roles provides people with a place to share ideas, pray, and face the challenges of ministry together.

If you’re interested in setting up a regional group in your area and would like some support to start, our staff team would love to help you.

Story by Maryanne Spurdle and Sophia Sinclair

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Contact Rach Dixon: rach@hillcrestchapel.org

Contact JonJon Ruakere via Agora Church: office@agorachurch.nz

CONNECTING AT YOUTH HUI

“We’re just trying to encourage the youth that Jesus is there to meet them where they’re at in different stages of their lives, trying to keep them connected”, says Renata Te Aho. “This is the time when they get balanced in their life”.

Renata and his wife, Mihiwai, have been running a weekly youth night at Tauwhare Gospel Chapel since 2016. The couple have day jobs—Renata as a lineman for the electricity grid, and Mihiwai as a teacher—as well as grown children with children of their own. They also have a heart for the youth at Tauwhare Marae, where they’ve lived for the past 34 years.

“I’ll be honest, it is hard work” Renata says. “But it’s not about us, it’s about getting the message out to them that Christ loves them. No matter where they are, what they do, his love is unconditional”.

As part of this work, they and other youth leaders approached the elders to start up a youth conference in 2020 with two other Ngāti Hauā marae. Renata said that they’re all related Wiremu Tāmihana, a 19th century chief who “laid down the taiaha and took up the Bible”.

About 80 teens and youth leaders attended the second conference over three days this past February. Raungaiti Marae (north of Matamata) hosted, and they were also joined by youth from Rukumoana Marae (associated with Anderson Bible Chapel in nearby Morrinsville) and a group from Woodville, near Palmerston North.

“In the future maybe we can spread a bit further” Renata says, “but at the moment, with our resources and our focus, we’ve only concentrated on that area”.

Renata said that days at the conference start with karakia, devotions and food. Afternoons have opportunities for sports and outdoor activities. This year, many of them took the trek to the gravesite of Tarore after an elder shared the testimony of the young Māori evangelist who was murdered in 1836.



Renata Te Aho and Aaron Hodgson at the Youth Hui

In the evenings, they worship in song and listen to speakers and sometimes testimonies.

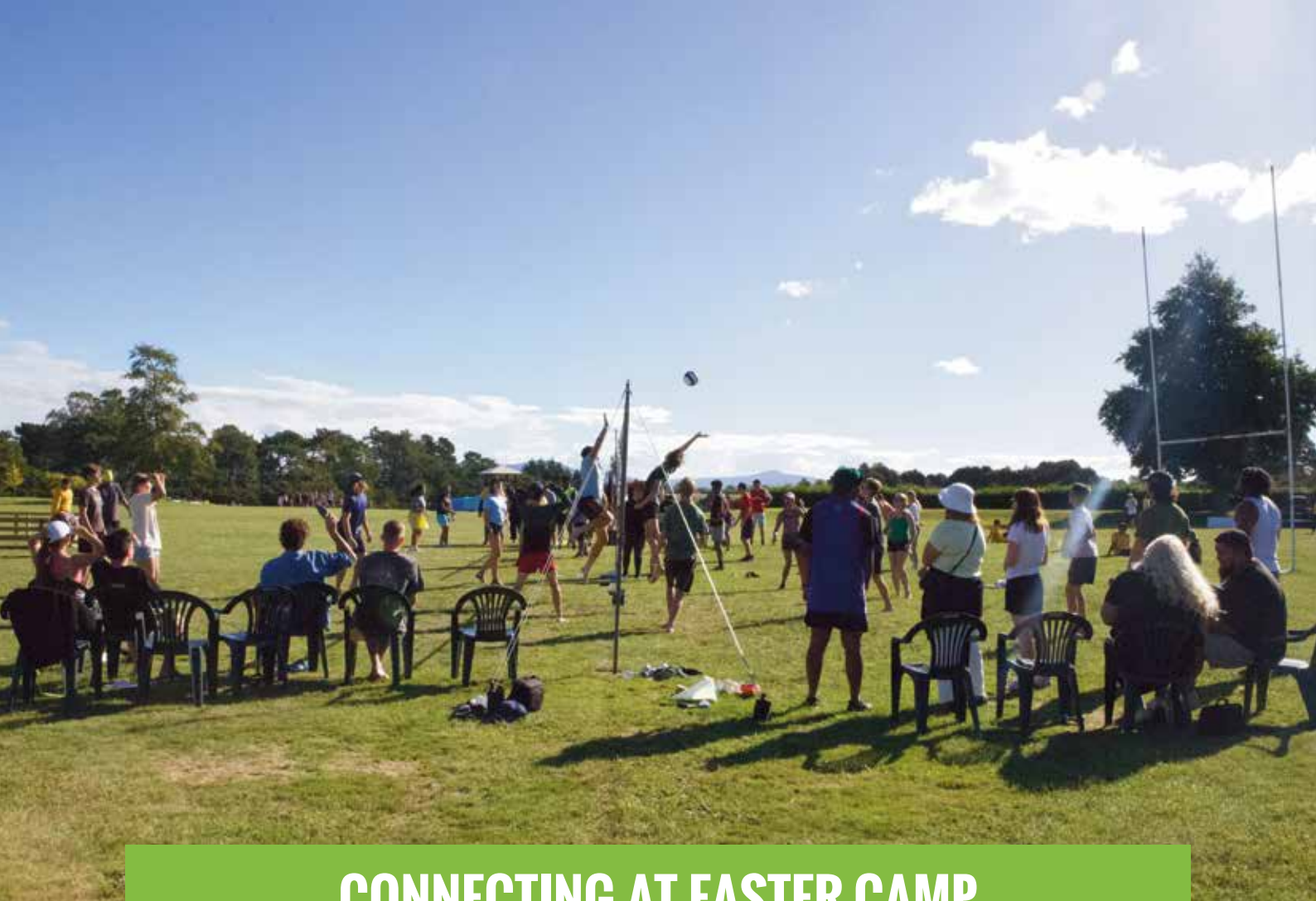
Renata said that talks are in both Te Reo Māori and English, as about two thirds of the youth are Te Reo speakers. A variety night mixed youth up into different groups to encourage those from different areas to get to know each other.

“I’ve seen the connections getting stronger between us”, Renata says, even in the short time the conference has been running. He says he was also encouraged by the support he received from Nick Goodwin, CCCNZ’s Regional Enabler for Waikato, and others leaders in the network who attended the conference’s pōwhiri.

“We’re seeing young people that we wouldn’t see normally at conferences and camps just coming together” says Aaron Hodgson, CCCNZ Regional Youth Enabler for Waikato. He’s particularly encouraged by the work that Renata and Mihiwai are doing to disciple Ngāti Hauā youth: “God’s doing his work in Māori to reach Māori”.

Story by Maryanne Spurdle

“I’ll be honest, it is hard work” Renata says. “But it’s not about us, it’s about getting the message out to them that Christ loves them. No matter where they are, what they do, his love is unconditional.”



CONNECTING AT EASTER CAMP

This year CCCNZ youth leaders in the South and North Islands came together to plan and host Easter Camps specifically for connecting CCCNZ youth groups.

Putting on the North Island Easter Camp at Tōtara Springs Christian Centre was a team effort coordinated by Hangyul Cho, the Associate Pastor at Northcross Church. Hangyul said that leaders from at least 10 churches were involved, with each taking responsibility for different elements of the camp. They were pleased with the outcome.

“It felt very camp-y” he says—larger than a retreat, but smaller than a festival. “The campsite was phenomenal. We were able to do so many activities, which allowed intermingling between the youth groups”.

In previous years some youth groups hadn’t joined any Easter camp and others had gone to the one at Mystery Creek. In 2021, Easter Camp North Island had about 190 campers, which was near capacity.

CCCNZ Waikato Youth Enabler Aaron Hodgson was the camp’s speaker: “I think Han and his team did a really

good job of having a balance between camp activities and some fun stuff, but also a lot of down time for people to get to know each other and connect with people they normally wouldn’t”.

Planning is already underway for North Island Easter Camp 2022. If you’re in the North Island and want to know more, have a chat with your youth leader or youth pastor.

The Top of the South Easter Camp was a collective effort from Hope Community Church, Grace Church Richmond, and Tasman Church. Speakers Marina Shannon, Shannon Samuels, Anthony Samuels, and Steve Maina shared the gospel with the crowd of young people.

Regional Youth Enabler Sean Young says, “a real highlight was being able to connect young people and people and leaders with others from different youth groups as they heard the gospel message and celebrated the resurrection of Jesus together”. He says planning is already underway for Top of the South Easter Camp 2022.

We asked two young people to share their reflections on attending Easter Camp:

“My highlight of the North Island Easter Camp 2021 was the Sunday morning service, when so many people lifted their hands either to renew their relationship with Christ or to accept Christ in their lives for the first time.

“So many people’s lives were touched by this camp including mine; I have been a Christian for a long time now, but leading up to Easter Camp I felt overworked and stressed out. I had been too focused on making my last year of high school count but I had somehow begun to lose sight of what my purpose was.

“After spending four days of not thinking about and worrying over schoolwork and instead, focusing on God, I could finally reflect on the last year and most importantly remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. When I took time to sit and reflect, I could see all that God had done for me and I felt strongly convicted on just how distracted I have been.

“On a less spiritual level, one of the things I appreciated about this camp was the way it was run, in that it was well balanced between services and seminars and outdoor activities. I actually forgot my phone and social media existed until I was on the bus on the way home! This was my first Easter camp and I really hope it won’t be my last!”

**Cate Wilson, Year 13
Northcross Church Youth**



Cate Wilson and youth leader Hangyul Cho



Siao-wei Huang

“The highlight of the Top of the South Easter camp for me was being able to spend time with other Christians and meet other people. To hear amazing speakers and learn things I might have not noticed before—it reminded me of what God did for us. I loved the way the speakers shared their message, by using stories.

“The thing that stood out to me in the talks was that it reminded me again about Easter. Also it reminded me to think that it should’ve been me, everything that Jesus went through should’ve been me. He took what I deserved. It was good to reflect on what he went through and what he did because of his great love for us. It is always good to keep on getting reminded of it.

“On the first day of camp I enjoyed getting mixed with other youth groups and playing team activities. I loved the worship (praising God). Another thing I loved was the atmosphere, it was really good because of how everyone treated each other and seeing other people getting touched by God’s Word.

“Something meaningful that I would take away from camp is that I felt my heart and my relationship with God was strengthened. I felt changed, and more confident to share God’s words to others and to not be afraid. I felt refreshed in my trust in God.”

Siao-wei Huang (17)

Story by Maryanne Spurdle and Sophia Sinclair.

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Contact Aaron Hodgson: aaron@rsc.org.nz

Contact Sean Young: seanmikeyoung@gmail.com



SUMMIT CONNECTIONS

Rebekah Reeve and Leslie Scott met at the Ministry Summit in May 2021. Rebekah is the Worship Director at The Orchard church in Te Puke and Leslie serves as Communications and Music Coordinator on the staff team at Birkenhead Community Church (North Shore, Auckland).

Leslie met Rebekah's co-worker Dot Trew hitt during the Admin Track, and when they were sitting down to lunch Rebekah joined them:

"When I found out that Bex is one of the music leaders at The Orchard we quickly realised we had a lot in common and the conversation just flowed so naturally.

We are both so passionate about our music teams and music as a ministry... we were sharing stories back and forth and talking about tips and tricks we'd learned and just the joy we find in worshipping and leading the congregation in music".

It was encouraging to meet someone similar at Summit, says Rebekah, "...it connected two pools of knowledge/experience, within the same 'stable' of thinking. When you find someone who fundamentally thinks the same and who reasons through problems with the guidelines and goals that you also go by, that speeds up the process of getting to know someone and makes helping each other more efficient, and fun!"

Photo: Leslie Scott and Rebekah Reeve



Leslie and Rebekah's kids enjoying time together earlier this year.

When they returned home at the end of Summit, Rebekah and Leslie started texting and using the video messaging app Marco Polo to share about their work at church, their music teams, favourite worship songs, and their kids and families.

“Since Summit we’ve been in touch heaps,” says Rebekah, “initially with lots of back-and-forth yarns and ideas related to ministry, but in a personal/family-life way as well. We’ve both been able to offer help, encouragement and just a listening ear to the other a whole lot”.

During the mid-year school holiday break, Leslie and her family stayed in an Airbnb just 12 minutes away from Rebekah:

“We both have three kids close in age and they all got on just as fabulously as their mothers! We went to The Orchard Church with them on Sunday, then spent the rest of the day together with our families. We spent every day with their family while we were there—playing at parks, swimming at hot pools, going on train rides...”

These kinds of connections are so important to have across the CCCNZ movement, says Rebekah:

“Just having a sounding-board on-hand to text ideas/problems to and to hear how they deal with that issue in their church can save so much time and planning. Even flicking basic things like spreadsheets, formatting, program run-sheets etc. These things all take so much time to think through and make changes to, so why not share the work we’ve done in one area with another church who are seeking to do the same? It saves everyone time, and probably money, and ultimately it helps build the Church nationwide”.

Leslie agrees, “I’ve found so much value in our connection and feel so blessed to have been at Summit and connected with Bex and lots of others from other churches. One really cool thing that’s happened since then is, with Bex’s encouragement, I started leading worship on Sunday at BCC—something I’d felt called to do for a while, but hadn’t had the courage to do before. It was amazing having her help me to take this step and praying for me every step of the way”.

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Contact Leslie Scott: leslie@bcc.org.nz



CONNECTING DURING THE DELTA OUTBREAK

There is no question that the Delta variant outbreak has been significantly harder than previous outbreaks of COVID-19.

Parents have found the home learning and life juggle harder, more people are seeking help for mental health concerns, and churches and church leaders are facing numerous challenges.

There's a cumulative effect from the turmoil of the past 18 months, says PastorLINK Enabler Kerry Rickard, "Church leaders have had no respite from the relentless decision-making that is required in a pandemic. One key difference this time around is that there is no 'light at the end of the tunnel', no easy solution or knowledge as to when this will all be over".

There is also a distinction between Auckland (and Waikato and Northland) and the rest of the country—as they've endured the longest lockdowns and degree of restrictions, "But it's more than enduring lockdown," says Kerry, "Aucklanders have faced a higher level of risk. They know people who have suffered with COVID-19, the risk of catching the virus has been

greater... there is much more complacency about these risks in the rest of the country".

In the midst of all the noise, there are many people faithfully pursuing real and creative ways to be the Church in the context God has placed them.

Gathering together in new ways

As restrictions have relaxed in different parts of the country, some churches have explored home-based gatherings—watching church online content together and discussing it in smaller groups. Other groups have been meeting for picnics or making the most of the outdoor space for encouraging connections before moving back to services of 100 people max (if in Level 2).

Online gatherings have continued to be a source of connection for many churches. This year CCCNZ Auckland hosted an online Prayer Gathering and three online Church and Ministry Forums—two in partnership with Murray Stevenson and GC3; one on lament, and a second one about empowering mission from



Rach Dixon delivers Hillcrest Chapel's 'Light Party in a Bag'

home, with a third forum in partnership with Pathways College, on Biblical Teaching and Preaching, facilitated by Alan Stanley.

Leaders in Children and Families Ministry, and leaders in Prayer Ministry joined E-QUIP online training where small groups met over Zoom to discuss books, share ideas and keep each other accountable.

Many small groups have continued to meet online, and new connections formed during lockdown have been maintained or grown. A few churches have found unexpected ministry to people in different parts of the country via online ministry.

As churches and leaders seek a way forward under the traffic light system, the flexibility of churches to meet in smaller groups, to utilise online tools, and prioritise pastoral care will be key in navigating the next season of ministry.

Our website features a section on navigating the new COVID-19 Protection Framework, where we aim to feature more perspectives from a variety of churches within the movement and their approach to this new season, check it out: www.ccnz.nz/covid-19-response

Caring for each other in new ways

During 2020 many leadership teams and elderships realised a real gap in pastoral care of their churches—as revealed by the disconnection of lockdown. Many elderships have committed extra time to listening and praying with people. Working through a phone tree and intentionally asking people how they're going. It takes real effort to go deep with people and shepherd them out of a place of care and understanding, says Kerry.

One of the elders of Mt Wellington Community Church in Auckland recently made up care packages for every home in their church, and the eldership distributed the packages in a COVID-safe way. Senior Pastor Russell Grainger says the packages were very well received.

Thanks to the generosity of Lichfield Lands, Willow Park Christian Camp (Eastern Beach in Auckland) were able to partner with Tāmaki Community Church to bless people during lockdown. With no camps on over the 11 weeks of lockdown, the funding from Lichfield Lands enabled Willow Park to be able to regularly supply cooked meals for distribution by Tāmaki Community Church to those in need.

“Many elderships have committed extra time to listening and praying with people. Working through a phone tree and intentionally asking people how they’re going. It takes real effort to go deep with people and shepherd them out of a place of care and understanding.”

In Hamilton, Hillcrest Chapel’s Children and Families Pastor Rach Dixon and her team delivered 146 ‘Light Party in a Bag’ kits to their community. Rach says they estimate the bags reached around 300 children and their families—with some people from church ordering bags to gift to neighbours, grandchildren, and friends. Bags contained everything they would need to have a fun party at home—games, a link to a playlist, a QR code for a video of people from the church sharing what it meant to them to know Jesus’ love, a scavenger hunt and more. The deliveries were hugely successful for connecting with children and their families to show them Jesus’ love at a time where they are under immense pressure and stress.

For LifeChurch Manurewa pastors Lui Ponifasio QSM and Ane Ponifasio QSM, connecting with their community during the Delta outbreak has meant facing significant public health issues head on. Their team have been active in connecting their church and community in a range of ways: helping people to stay healthy and get tested when their community became of ‘suburb of interest’, providing practical help like food deliveries, supporting people to access vaccination, translating key COVID-19 health information in Pasifika languages, as well as the ongoing pastoral work of leading their congregation spiritually.

“Our main thing at the moment is setting up vaccination drive-throughs, giving out meals and food parcels, and using media ministries to help people,” says Lui.

Facing ministry challenges together

Waikato Youth Enabler Aaron Hodgson initiated an online gathering of youth leaders and youth pastors from Waikato and Auckland to discuss ministering effectively to young people in the midst of a lockdown—a place for sharing how difficult and challenging the past few months has been for youth and their families.

Kerry is also aware of pastors, pastoral couples, and pastoral staff calling each other for support, sharing, and encouragement—with people making the most of increased ability and willingness to use video connecting technology.

Remaining connected in the face of division

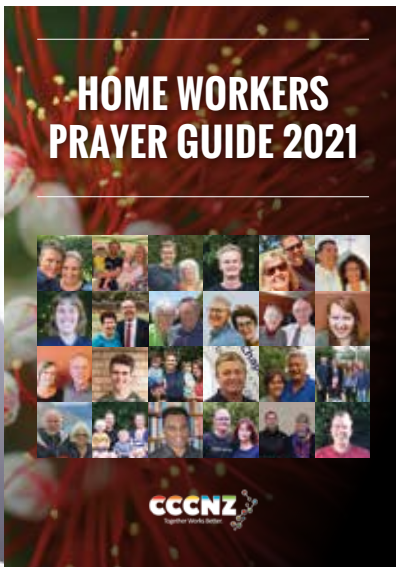
Many have invested a huge amount of energy into ministering in the pandemic and there is what Kerry describes as a “real weariness” among the leaders he’s regularly talking to.

Leaders are now facing the added pressure of navigating the Scriptural, ethical, and practical dilemmas of the new COVID-19 Protection Framework, or ‘traffic light’ system. There is a significant threat of opinions over vaccines, mandates, certificates, and public health dividing churches.

Despite the changing and challenging landscape of the past 18 months, we’ve seen that our connection with each other hasn’t been cancelled—in fact, in some areas, connection has deepened in unexpected and profound ways.

This COVID-19 season is a profoundly difficult time for church connection and ministry, and yet God is at work. Perhaps this time of distancing and stress has revealed significant cracks that need addressing? This season has revealed our utter dependence on our Creator. It has revealed our weaknesses and our strengths.

As we move into a new season where there are many unknowns we must not forget that our goal hasn’t changed: working together to see people come to hear about and know Jesus. Our God hasn’t changed. He, who has been at work throughout history “...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”.



SUPPORT OUR NEW ZEALAND HOME WORKERS!

Our Home Workers Guide is out now and includes information for how you can pray for New Zealand home workers and their families, plus CCCNZ linked in churches and regional campsites.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

We have a number of private Facebook groups set up to be digital places of connection.

Admin (for anyone involved in church administration, finances, governance or health and safety); Youth (for key youth leaders and pastors); Auckland (for connecting people from CCCNZ churches around Auckland); CCCNZ Prayer (for people involved in prayer ministry, or keen to join others in prayer); and Children and Family Ministries (for key leaders of children and family ministries).

Visit: www.facebook.com/ChristianCommunityChurchesofNZ/groups/

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Our Regional Enablers include volunteers and paid staff who work together in teams to encourage connection among churches in their region.

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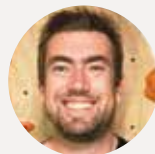


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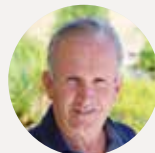


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JOIN US!

NORTHLAND

Clark Road Chapel
Raumati Crescent Chapel

BAY OF PLENTY

Fenton Park Bible Church
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

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

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

WELLINGTON

Church @ Cedarwood
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
Wairakei Road Bible Church

This is a list of linked in churches as of November 2021. For more information on how to join us, see www.ccnz.nz/link-in

