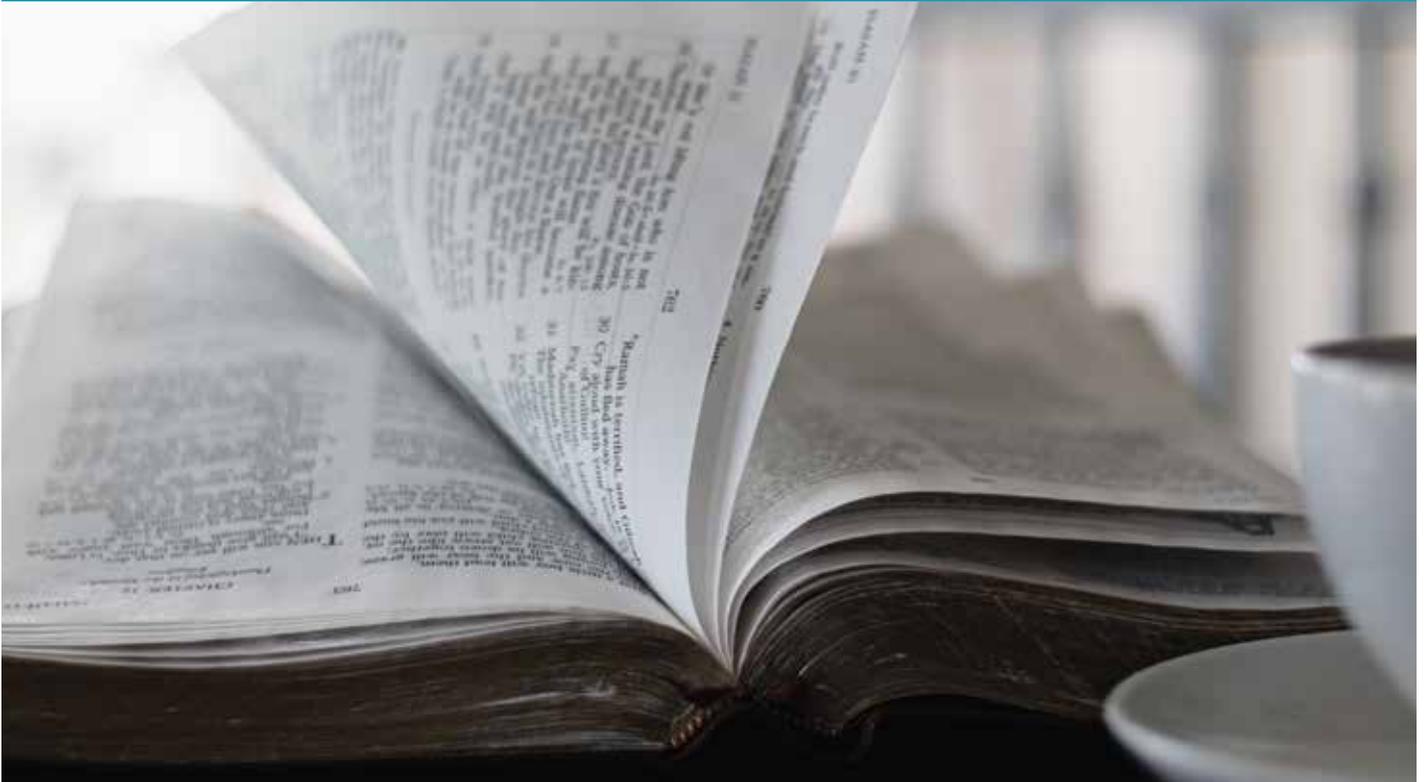


JESUS: OUR LIVING HOPE IN CHANGING TIMES



CHRIS THOMAS
SPEAKER, CCCNZ WAIKATO & CANTERBURY
REGIONAL CONFERENCES 2019

The opening verses of Peter's letter addresses his hearers as 'exiles'. The dictionary defines an exile as, "*the state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political reasons.*" But it would be most helpful for us to hear the sense of what Peter is saying if we were to think of the word *refugee*. The western world is changing quickly—what was a comfortable environment for Christians is fast becoming a place of hostility and civil suspicion. Christian values have moved from being simply *tolerated*, to now being *actively rejected*. What we, as Christians in the West, expected to happen in *other* places, is now happening here.

Peter calls his hearers *exiles* because that is what they were, in fact, that is what we are. This world is not our home, we

are born of a different kingdom. As followers of Jesus, each of us carry a quiet discontent deep in our soul. The great theologian and writer, C.S. Lewis, described it like this, "*If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.*"¹

You were made for another world, a Kingdom over which Jesus rules eternally, and it is in this kingdom that Peter calls us to take our stand. Or as Peter often says, to live *holy* lives—*set apart* lives. When most people try to answer the question, "How do I be holy?", their first instinct is to think about all the things I should do, or more often than not, all the things I *shouldn't* do. But that's not where Peter starts. He will get to actions, but first, Peter's concern isn't about *what* we should *do*—but *how* we should *think*. Peter wants the gospel to reorient our minds.

¹ Mere Christianity, 1952.

Rongopai

“Romans 8 says it like this, ‘What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?’ then the rest of that lofty chapter roots our confidence in the reality that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ. Nothing.”

A Living Hope

Peter begins his letter with the most foundational of truths: *God saves sinners who don't deserve to be saved*. So, let's begin where Peter begins. Peter says that all of redemption's history finds its climax in the cross of Christ and an empty tomb; a demonstration of the endless mercy of God. This mercy, shown in the death of Jesus, ushers in a new way of life through the resurrection of Jesus. This is no *empty* hope that asks hollow questions like, “There must be something better than this life I'm living”, instead it is a *living* hope, the type that takes us by the scruff of the neck and lifts us above the ruins of this life to see the reality of all that God has in store for those who love him.

Your salvation has been secured—it's ready and waiting—nothing more needs to be accomplished. More than that, in Christ you are being *guarded* by God's power for this salvation! How incredible! How amazing! Salvation is secure. God's power holds you ready for it. No matter what, no matter what trial or tribulation, no matter what persecution, in fact, no matter about death—if you are in Christ, God wins!

Romans 8 says it like this, “*What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*”, then the rest of that lofty chapter roots our confidence in the reality that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ. Nothing.

A Temporary Trial

I know, many of our hardships seem anything but a *'short time'*, but that's what Peter calls them. Peter is reminding us about a truth that Solomon introduced us to, that this life is a vapour, a morning fog that burns off as the sun rises. Peter says that anything we experience here, as hard and as long as it may feel, is a *'short time'*, a *temporary trial* in the scheme of God's eternal plans. Not only are they temporary, Peter says that they aren't wasted experiences either. The God who can shape dust and breathe on it to create you, can take your pain, your suffering, your tears, and shape it to create life.

A Higher Calling

So now, because of the living hope which we have gained in Christ, God calls us to take a stand. This is a call to live different lives, holy lives — not as a means to gain God's mercy and grace, but as a *response* to God's mercy and grace.

If, today, you know Jesus as the saviour of your soul and Lord over your life—this is no small thing. For you to be acceptable in the sight of God involved far more than you simply ‘turning over a new leaf’ or ‘trying harder to do the right thing’. Your salvation involved more than you making a decision one day to ‘turn your life around’. God bought you. God saw the mess of your life, the brokenness and rebellion—all the sin, all the hurt, all the shame—and God stepped in with grace and bought you. He *redeemed* you. And that didn't come cheap. And it wasn't temporary. It took the blood of the unblemished, spotless, lamb of God. Peter says that this living hope is set *completely on grace*. You've been called to a higher calling than this temporary world, filled with temporary trials. You have a living hope. And this hope demands *minds* that are ready for action.

Take A Stand

Some of you have already discovered this truth, the rest of you will discover it soon enough — this world is a hard place to live. Few people grow old with contentment and without regret. Few people grow old without the scars of painful experiences. Even being a Christian isn't a shield from these things; Jesus said, “In this world you will face trouble...”

You can spend your life on lesser things, on endlessly chasing satisfaction and contentment in a life that will fade away like the morning dew, or you can settle in your heart right now, “The gospel is where I'll take a stand!”

Chris Thomas is an Aussie pastor and a great friend and supporter of CCCNZ. He has made himself available to work with people who are chairing elderships to grow and develop churches in discipleship: christhomas19@me.com

A LIVING HOPE

KNOWING AND SHARING THE GOSPEL IN CHANGING TIMES

A CCCNZ CENTRAL-LOWER NORTH ISLAND CONFERENCE

8.30AM–3.30PM, 24 AUGUST | THE ANCHOR CHURCH, PORIRUA

Join people from like-minded churches in your region to go deeper into 1 Peter, a book which unpacks the real, living hope we have in Jesus Christ—and what it looks like practically to follow him in changing times.

SOMETHING BETTER THAN BITTERNESS



MARK GRACE
CCCNZ AMBASSADOR

The Book of Ruth is set in a bleak period after Israel enters the promised land, and before the time of kings. Ruth's story takes place in the time of the judges and comes just as the Book of Judges ends with a night-long gang rape of one woman and the communal abduction and rape of six hundred women. It's a time of anarchy and it's profoundly difficult for women.

And yet, Ruth details a redemptive story entirely from the perspective of women.

The story begins in Moab at the scene of Naomi's despair. Famine has forced her family to Moab, where they live as immigrants in a land not their own.

Naomi has lost her two sons and her husband, and she's responsible for two foreign daughters-in-law. She has no status, no security, no identity, no dignity, she is of no value.

She's feeling broken and bereft. Naomi and her daughters-in-law are making preparations for the journey from Moab to Bethlehem where there is food. Bitterness towards God begins to blur her thinking.

This bitterness starts in our hearts when we sense there is an unfairness, an injustice, a sense where we've been wronged. What we want begins to shape our thinking more than what God wants. When our expectations are not in alignment with what God wants, bitterness blurs our thinking and actions.

In one breath Naomi expresses recognition of God's kindness, provision and care in relation to her and her daughters-in-law, then in the next breath her bitterness discredits God's goodness: "...the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

It is in the depths of Naomi's despair that Ruth, one of her Moabite daughters-in-law, clings to Naomi: "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried".



Have you been allowing bitterness to grow?

There has been potential for bitterness developing in the months since the Christchurch Mosque Shootings, a sense of injustice and unfairness.

Why isn't the media following the massacres of Christians across the world?

Why does the media refuse to share a Christian point of view on moral or ethical issues?

What about the Church? What about the people of God? Do they count? Do they have worth? What about my people, what about me?!

We may feel resentment towards the media for not acknowledging the worth, value and significance of the people of God. We must be careful, because bitterness can quickly lead to blurry thinking about God and ultimately a bitterness towards God.

Bitterness that makes us fearful at the very moment we need faith.

Bitterness that makes us fragile at the very time we need to be fearless.

Bitterness that leads us to freeze at the very moment we can be fruitful.

As an Australian blogger recently wrote:

“Jesus warned that those who follow him would be hated and persecuted. The suffering of the people of God is not news to him. He weeps over those who are martyred, and so should we. He has promised to be with us in the furnace of persecution, but he hasn't promised to spare us from it. Why? One reason must be he knows how short our lives are and how glorious our futures are with him. God bears witness to his Son in our weakness, in our suffering, in our lowliness. God is working in the Church's pain and persecution to bring about his glorious purposes and promises. The suffering of God's people has been a profound witness to his greatness and goodness for centuries.”

Something better from the bitter

Naomi and Ruth make the difficult journey from Moab to Bethlehem, and Naomi's bitterness is so deep, so painful, that her whole identity is shaped around it. “Call me ‘Mara,’” she says. “Call me ‘bitterness’”.

The black hole of bitterness has reshaped her understanding of God: The larger Naomi becomes in her bitterness the less she is able to see God. This kind of bitterness draws us into the center, it makes us big and God small, it makes us fear the very people we are trying to reach.

This kind of bitterness turns our focus from God's global cross-cultural purposes and leads us to think more about our own preservation than God's multicultural plans. In Naomi's moment of bleakness, in her bitterness, in her blindness, can you see God is doing something better?

To Naomi, God gives Ruth.

To Ruth, God gives Boaz, who acts as their redeemer.

To Boaz and Ruth, God gives a baby.

A baby, who will become a descendant of King David, who will become a descendant of the King of Kings.

In Naomi's bleakness, in her bitterness, even in her blindness, God is doing something better. God is working out his purposes to redeem her socially, financially, to restore her status in the society.

In Naomi's bitterness God is working to redeem us. From Ruth's baby, 30 generations later, would come the one who would rescue us from our sin, redeem us from evil and deliver us from death.

“In the bleakest, darkest moments of our nation God has not left us, God has not forsaken us. In these very moments he is doing something better.”

Jesus Christ who, without sin, would cry in the bleakest of moments “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” In his moment of holy bitterness, Jesus is the one who rescues and restores us.

In the bleakest, darkest moments of our nation God has not left us, God has not forsaken us. In these very moments he is doing something better. He is bringing about his global purposes. He is working to bring a people from every tribe and tongue to himself.

We don't need to be bitter; we don't need to be blinded. Because of Jesus we can open our hearts and eyes to our triune God and trust that he is doing something better across these islands, at this time.

A LIVING HOPE

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A CCCNZ AUCKLAND REGIONAL CONFERENCE

8.30AM–3.30PM, 21 SEPTEMBER | NORTHCROSS COMMUNITY CHURCH, OTEHA, AUCKLAND

Join people from like-minded churches in your region to go deeper into 1 Peter, a book which unpacks the real, living hope we have in Jesus Christ—and what it looks like practically to follow him in changing times.

LOVING OUR MUSLIM NEIGHBOURS



SOPHIA SINCLAIR
RONGOPAI EDITOR &
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

How do we show the love of Christ across religious and cultural boundaries? More specifically, how do we love our Muslim neighbours?

The events of Friday 15 March acted a catalyst for Kiwi Christians to think through and discuss what it looks like to engage meaningfully with people from another faith or culture in our New Zealand context—for many of us, it was the first time we've had to wrestle with these ideas.

The reality is this: We've been living in a multicultural and increasingly secular environment for some time.

New Zealand boasts an incredible diversity of cultural make-up, with Auckland being one of the world's most 'super diverse' cities. The number of people with religious beliefs other than Christianity is growing across New Zealand and is particularly true of Auckland.

At the same time, the number of Kiwis marking 'no religion' at census time has increased over the past few decades. 20% said they had 'no religion' in 1991, this number now sits at 41% (last year's census stats are still to be released).

We must think through what we believe and why, and how we might communicate this in a way that demonstrates the love of Christ.

The Christchurch Mosque Shootings made many New Zealanders think about how we might practically reach out to the Kiwi Muslim community, and more specifically for us as Christians: What it might mean to love and befriend our Muslim neighbours?

The good news is that there are a number of Kiwi Christians who have been quietly doing this for years—both here in New Zealand and overseas. We have an opportunity to listen and learn how God has been moving and gain wisdom and insight to help inform our actions.

Rongopai Editor Sophia Sinclair caught up with Bruce Knox, a GC3 Partner, to chat about how God has been at work in the wake of the Christchurch Mosque Shootings:



I got a text from one of our neighbours in the day following the shooting, he is from one of the countries that has been having a bad time recently.

This is what he said: 'Hi Bruce, I thank you all for your sympathy for this painful incident which has afflicted New Zealand, it has brought the New Zealand community pain and sorrow, there are no words to express the sorrow which has been afflicted to the victims and their families. So, we remain united, to keep a great country for all people, I join with you in prayer.'

This was simply the affirmation of one of our neighbours who wanted to say, 'we are in this together, coming before God seeking his love and mercy, together.'

In the days after the shooting our church was scheduled to host a community meal celebrating the Nowruz Feast, or Persian New Year. I had many conversations with our local police force. They had a difficult time understanding what was going on—we were a church, but we were going to have 150-180 Muslims in our building that weekend?

They saw a risk factor coming from both sides—there was a possibility of both a copycat attack and/or a reprisal. They grappled with the risk, and even considered an armed guard, but in the end, they asked us to cancel for the risk and safety of everybody. Instead, our group got together and told stories, then we stood together and asked for God’s mercy and love, for God to reveal himself in the coming days and months, and out of this several situations have evolved.

I received a text from another friend: ‘Hi Bruce, thanks for the nice speech and your praying last night. Something happened to me and I’m so amazed and shocked. The time you prayed for me yesterday I asked God to disclose something in my life. Amazingly, last night I faced a nightmare, a dream, in which the exact story that I’d asked God for I saw. I saw Jesus standing and talking to me, I burst into tears early that morning. I couldn’t believe what had happened. I met Jesus in that dream, I know that he is the saviour.’

Over the week that followed I had meals out and around with various families, I had many conversations over coffee and food. As we talked about the events of March 15, things began to come out in conversation. Obviously, this event was at the forefront of everybody’s mind.

There was a real sense of astonishment over how New Zealand had reacted, how the nation had gathered around the Islamic community to support them. People said they never believed it would happen, and this sort of support would never happen back home. ‘We know it only happened because this was New Zealand’, they told me.

For many, New Zealand is seen as a country based on Christian principles, and the response was because the people of New Zealand were following the way of Jesus, these actions are a response of love—even to your enemy. I’ve heard many comments about how following Jesus is real and meaningful.

A guy from a very closed country, here in New Zealand as a refugee, commented: ‘this would never happen at home, these are the ways of Jesus, this is why I want to follow Jesus, this is why I have left my country to be where it is safe, where there is freedom and I can worship in a way that is meaningful in every situation. I’ve come to a country where I can know the truth about Jesus.’

I had coffee with another friend who told me what it meant to live in New Zealand. He so values the freedom to choose, he is no longer told to do this, wear that, pray this way, and he can say who Jesus really is.

He shared that he’d worked through what to do with his sin. That is was no longer issues of sacrifice or giving, or other ways of earning favour with God. He told me that he’d found that his sins were forgiven because of what Jesus has done. He said it wasn’t about the title of Muslim or Christian, but whether he knew Jesus. He came to New Zealand with only a few hundred in his pockets, but he had found the truth about Jesus, and that was worth so much more.

The events of March 15 have spurred on this conversation and many, many more. Why? Because people want to know the truth: why do you, as followers of Jesus, respond in the way you do?

March 15 has meant opportunities to raise issues about what it means to follow Jesus, to have meals with friends in the context of empathy and love, and to respond in a way that brings the love of Jesus into every conversation.

Action points for your church to consider

1. Get to know your neighbours! Listen and learn about their lives. Have a cup of coffee with a Muslim friend
2. Attend Friendship First: A 7-week course, every Thursday from 1st August till 12th September (in Auckland)
3. Join the Our Neighbours Movement
 - The 3rd National Neighbours Conference: 23-26 January 2020, Woodend Christian Camp near Christchurch
 - <https://ourneighbours.co.nz/>

Further information:

Contact to Bruce Knox (A GC3 partner)
021 224 5669
brucehknnox@kics.co.nz

Key Resources

Check out the resources from MARN
<http://marn.org.nz/resources/> and some helpful links recommended by MARN
<http://marn.org.nz/links/>



CHRIS NORTHCOTT
YOUTH PASTOR, LINCOLN ROAD BIBLE CHAPEL

Cultural diversity is a fact of life in 21st century New Zealand. Cultural unity, is not.

For some New Zealanders, immigration is something that raises anxiety. The mosque shootings on March 15 highlighted the worst side of this attitude toward immigrants. “They Are Us” countered this, by asserting a common heritage of all who live in New Zealand: Whether by waka, sailing ship or passenger jet, we are all immigrants to these islands.

This is a well-meaning claim, but doesn’t change the fact that many people feel some level of unease about large numbers of new people moving into the country. Concerns about immigration are not unreasonable, and working through these concerns together is what is needed to have a diverse and unified nation. “They Are Us” is a commendable plea but it appeals to a basis for unity that is insufficient to actually unify.

True power to unify

The gospel has sufficient power to unify a culturally diverse society. But it needs to conform attitudes into its image first. As Christians the gospel should shape our values and perspectives on all things. But too often we are shaped more by the values of our culture or our own desires.

Paulus Orosius was a Christian thinker and historian who lived during the early 400s AD, when the western part of the Roman Empire was beginning to crumble under the barbarian invasions and mass people movements were happening all around the Roman world. “Immigration” was a very big issue of his day. It is evident that he valued his culture and took no pleasure in his civilization’s decline. But for him, that was not the most important thing.

Here is what he wrote:

“If only for this reason have the barbarians been sent within Roman borders, that the church of Christ might be filled with Huns and Suevi, with Vandals and Burgundians, with diverse and innumerable peoples of believers, then let God’s mercy be praised—even if this has taken place through our own destruction.”

“Do you believe this gospel wholeheartedly enough to let it move you to reach over the barrier of race to offer friendship and welcome in the name of Jesus? To welcome others to share in the benefits of living in a civilization like ours?”

These words display an astounding attitude. Hearing the reports of unchecked invasions, he asks: Perhaps God is behind this? He detects purpose may be in play—that people could come into the Christian faith who would never have heard of it otherwise. He acknowledges the cost: life as his civilization knows it is coming to an end. His response to this might be surprising to us; he does not complain angrily or fall into despair. Instead, he celebrates—rejoicing that the mercy of God can extend where it had not before.

Is the gospel calling us to go further?

Do we ever suspect that the gospel might call us further than we are prepared to go? That it might ask us to change some of our most cherished assumptions about life?

I once shared this statement of Orosius with a young Christian and Trump supporter. We had been discussing Trump’s policies on immigration. He immediately understood the implications of Orosius’ words and confessed that his faith was not ready for this. Orosius’ attitude toward immigration was indeed molded and shaped deeply by the gospel.

Orosius’ words provide reason to look past the fear of difference, or of loss, or of change that can foster unkind attitudes toward immigrants. In the events of his time Orosius saw possible providence and certain opportunity. He was less concerned with what immigration might cost the “us” of his day, and more concerned with how immigration might benefit the “them”. He recognised that in this there was the opportunity to fulfil the obligation (Rom 1:14-15) of all of Christ’s people—to share the priceless spiritual treasure that is the gospel. Even if it interfered with one’s rights and privileges.

An attitude of hospitality

This is one way the gospel fosters an attitude of hospitality and welcome rather than fear and exclusion. It is, of course, an attitude that comes from Jesus himself, and it is one that all his people should seek to emulate. A gospel-shaped attitude can build the kind of unity a culturally diverse society like New Zealand needs. With Jesus as our common centre nations really can be united. That is how the vision of Revelation 7:9-10 comes about. That vision is not only a future or heavenly reality but one that is to be made present now, and is one that Paul worked to make happen in the churches he served and shepherded (Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 3:11; Rom. 10:12).

The best basis for unity a progressive secular culture can call upon is that of our common humanity. We who are Christ’s call upon a stronger basis for unity. Ours is based not on creation but on redemption—a common Saviour. As redeemed people we are called to imitate our Redeemer in generosity and self-sacrifice in order to extend this welcome to others.

Saved to serve

The gospel is bigger than our personal salvation. It is the power of God for salvation, but the gospel first saves and then creates a new way of life among those who are saved. We find that the boundaries that might naturally exist between us are erased since we share a common spiritual life grounded in and bestowed by the triune God. Many immigrants to New Zealand already share in the Christian faith with us. These are our brothers and sisters in Christ. As for those who are not and where the boundaries still exist, a gospel-shaped attitude will have us see these boundaries as frontiers that our gospel requires us to cross.

Is the gospel we believe strong enough to do this today? Do you believe this gospel wholeheartedly enough to let it move you to reach over the barrier of race to offer friendship and welcome in the name of Jesus? To welcome others to share in the benefits of living in a civilization like ours? If it does, even despite misgivings you might have on immigration, then the mindset spoken of so splendidly by Paulus Orosius lives in you. It is the mind of Christ.

I know a man who does a lot of ministry with immigrants to New Zealand. He has said that most of the people he works with have never been inside a Kiwi’s home, let alone been invited in to come share a meal with them. After saying ‘hello’, perhaps such an invitation might be a great place for you to start. That is how the gospel has the power to bring about cultural unity in a diverse nation like New Zealand.



HEALING FROM TRAUMA

Sue Taylor has been working in the counselling space since 1994, specialising in trauma recovery as an ACC Sensitive Claims Registered therapist and as a trainer with CPS training (now Child Matters). From 2005-2018 Sue worked in Cambodia (12 years) and in Kolkata, India (1 year) with survivors of serious human rights abuses such as human trafficking and sexual assault.

Since 2010 Sue has been involved in writing curriculums and delivering training in the field of Trauma Informed Care. She has provided training to staff working in non-government organisations in Cambodia, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal, Afghanistan, Fiji and New Zealand, recently she delivered training to a group of Resource Carers from Oranga Tamariki.

Sue has been featured in the GC3 Daily Prayer Guide and is currently back in New Zealand where she attends Te Awamutu Bible Chapel.

Rongopai Editor Sophia Sinclair caught up with Sue to draw from her extensive experience in working with people impacted by trauma.

Since returning to New Zealand, what has day-to-day life as a trauma counsellor looked like for you?

Currently I am working two days a week with a crisis support organisation in Hamilton, providing counselling to survivors of sexual assault. I also work two days a week in private practice, meeting clients who have survived trauma or who have mental health conditions.

I also provide training workshops on “understanding the effects of trauma” to organisations, churches, and the Ministry of Social Development.

Let’s talk about the Christchurch Mosque Shootings, obviously this was a traumatic event for many people, what are some important things to know about collective trauma in relation to this event?

After the Christchurch Mosque Shootings there are many who have been directly and indirectly impacted by this trauma.

For families who witnessed the shootings and/or lost a family member this is a serious acute trauma which continues to cause these people to feel unsafe and will continue to impact them for many years. The mitigating factor is that these people are a part of a strong supportive community. The community has experienced a collective trauma. How each member recovers depends upon other factors relating to previous traumatic experiences and the level of personal support they have.

If a person has experienced multiple traumatic events and horrors this will impact on their ability and the time it will take to heal.

Do you have any advice for engaging with multiple worldviews of trauma, in the wake of this event? How might someone’s worldview impact the way they process trauma?

Culture does impact a person’s response to trauma as well as their ability to recover. Culture must be respected when support is given.

“Unconditional support is love in action. Others are impacted by our non-judgemental support with ‘no strings attached’. Our love in action says it all. When asked ‘why’ we can say: ‘because I am being the hands and feet of the God I serve.’ ”

For many, culture sees a need to grieve and bury the dead and then move on. It is possible that individuals will continue to grieve and experience trauma which is an emotional wound.

It is important when interacting with trauma survivors that well-meaning supporters do not take over control and assume but always seek out what it is that individuals need. Trauma results from a betrayal of trust and safety and an abuse of power so healing needs to take place within the context of safe, trusting, empowering relationships.

The live streaming of the event has added to the trauma for many people, particularly young people, who saw the video. What are some ways to help support people who witnessed the attack in this way?

Many people have seen media coverage of the traumatic event and have had their sense of safety and security compromised. The need for those around them is to respond by validating and normalising their thoughts and feelings.

Normalising is letting the person know that many are experiencing the same or similar feelings at this time. This helps the person realise that they are not overreacting or ‘going crazy’. It gives them permission to feel and think this way. Validating is acknowledging how the person is feeling.

For example, ‘I know you worry and feel scared about being in a public space or going to your church now because you wonder if something like this will happen again.’

What do you wish Christians and churches would know about trauma and recovery?

Everyone needs to understand that trauma can have a pervasive impact on a person. Affecting their thoughts, feelings, relationships and behaviour. It may also affect a person’s belief to trust in God.

There is no right or wrong way to respond to trauma. Everyone is a unique individual and may respond in different ways. This may be due to many individual personal factors, culture and a person’s own trauma story.

Experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event activates our stress response and affects our ability to think and regulate our emotions.

How can we grow in our ability to provide love and care to people who have experienced trauma?

Survivors of trauma need unconditional love and support without judgement. We are to comfort those with the comfort we have experienced from God ourselves.

As it says in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.’

We need to walk the journey alongside without disempowering the person. Just be there. Maybe just listening and providing practical support like meals.

How can the gospel speak into the life of someone who has experienced trauma?

Unconditional support is love in action. Others are impacted by our non-judgemental support with ‘no strings attached’. Our love in action says it all. When asked ‘why’ we can say: ‘because I am being the hands and feet of the God I serve.’ We introduce them to the God who loves us. First we must be prepared to have our hearts broken by the things that break the heart of God.

God’s Word has so much to offer. God offers us his peace, his strength, his love and life in all its fullness. Many recovering from trauma will not have the brain space to read it for themselves, but they will know this through his servants who choose to walk the journey with them.

Sue Taylor is available to speak and offers training to churches and ministries on the area of trauma and recovery. For more information please contact: suetaylor551@gmail.com

GRACE AND TOLERANCE: SHARING FAITH IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD



SOPHIA SINCLAIR
RONGOPAI EDITOR &
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



MURRAY BROWN
CCCNZ NATIONAL YOUTH ENABLER

A recent survey on evangelism conducted by Barna Research in the US discovered that young people were significantly less likely than older generations to share their beliefs with someone of a different faith. This, despite the fact that they still regarded evangelism as an important part of following Jesus.

Many New Zealand young people feel the same way, especially in the light of recent events. In their mind, sharing one's faith may seem inappropriate, intolerant and contradictory in modern Kiwi culture.

On one hand, our society appears to elevate tolerance of religious belief. We witnessed the Muslim call to prayer broadcast live across New Zealand and were invited to mourn and reflect together.

On the other hand, our society appears to condemn religious belief or—at the very least—the public expression

of it. The high-profile Christian rugby player Israel Folau lost a multi-million-dollar rugby contract for an Instagram post referencing Scripture. Terms like 'hate speech' and 'homophobia' are levelled as followers of Jesus are roundly condemned for expressing their views.

Current discussions about abortion rights and euthanasia see the views of Christians side-lined as unwelcome—purely because they have a grounding in personal faith.

We are now living in a society where it is considered 'unloving' to express a belief that is not in agreement with the beliefs of others.

A post-truth world

Abdu Murray is the author of *Saving Truth: Finding Meaning and Clarity in a Post-Truth World*, he argues that:

In a post-truth culture, where preferences and opinions are elevated over facts and truth, anything that challenges our preferences, even if a challenge is laced with facts, is deemed offensive and oppressive. How dare someone disagree with my preferences or opinions? Isn't freedom found in being able to fully express one's preferences and opinions without challenge? Western freedom is all about the ability to do, feel, and say whatever we want so long as we don't hurt someone else,

“It is the true gospel that motivates us to share the good news of Jesus with all—believing that it is good enough, sufficient enough, to save anyone—no matter their religious or cultural background, identity or preferences.”

isn't it? Even if we do hurt someone else, it's only because that someone else isn't affirming our preferences. And that person is an oppressor anyway. If oppressors get hurt in the process, well, they had it coming. Freedom must have no bounds. Not even reality will be our boundary. But what I've just described isn't freedom—it's autonomy.

A post-truth world goes further than recognising just shared humanity, it is a world where to express true difference or disagreement is to express hate rather than love, rejection rather than tolerance.

What are our young people making of this? How should we encourage them to respond? How do we help them to confidently hold onto faith and express their convictions in a way that shows compassion without compromising truth?

We may be tempted to airbrush the gospel, so it is easier to take in; don't mention the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation, and definitely don't talk about how following Christ challenges our inner-most behavioural preferences!

Maybe we swing in the other direction: Other people are too far gone, so bad, so distant from Christ—they'll *never* believe, so what's the point in engaging them, befriending them or sharing the gospel with them? Let's shout at them from a distance, or from the safety of our keyboards.

No. Both of these approaches present a weakened gospel of our own design. Perhaps there is also an underlying fear, mingled with a desire to be loved and accepted, at the heart of the reluctance to evangelise others?

Abdu Murray encourages his readers to recognise the saving truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ *for themselves*.

It is the true gospel which causes us to share our faith, not as judgemental hypocrites, but as 'one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread'. Sin is a problem for all of us. We all need the freedom from sin and death that only Christ can provide.

It is the true gospel that motivates us to share the good news of Jesus with all—believing that it is good enough, sufficient enough, to save anyone—no matter their religious or cultural background, identity or preferences.

It is the true gospel which causes us to claim: Our identity, belonging and hope is not in our family, our culture, our sexuality, our bodies, or our work.

Identity, belonging and hope are found in Jesus Christ alone.

Is it that simple?

Even if we express our faith, and share the true gospel, with gentleness and respect, the Bible tells us to expect backlash.

When we disciple our young people, we're not teaching them to follow Jesus in a world that respects Christian teaching or even admires Christian virtue. We're not even discipling them in a world that sees Christians as 'a little old fashioned' or is simply apathetic.

We must be discipling young people with the understanding that they are called to be salt and light, partnering with God in building a kingdom that finds expression in the world but is not of this world.

This is a reality for so many believers throughout the world today. Why should we in the West create an expectation among our young people that somehow, they have a *right* to be liked?

We can encourage our young people with the truth of the gospel.

By believing it and living it out ourselves. By encouraging them to know and understand what they believe and why. By modelling what it looks like to open our homes and share our lives with people who are different from us. By living lives where God's Word is read and treasured; prayer-laced lives that are dependent on God's grace and led by his Spirit.

Sharing the true gospel of Jesus Christ will always be polarising, the Apostle Paul says we will be like the aroma of Christ to those being saved, and the aroma of death to others.

It is a glorious gospel, and worthy to be shared in full—even in hard, costly and awkward ways.

In Christ is *abundant* life, and Christ's love is a great treasure from which we can never be separated.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES TO SERVE YOU AND YOUR CHURCH



Developing the Next Generation of Leaders

MARK GRACE
CCCNZ AMBASSADOR

Growing a mustard seed culture of leadership in your church might start small, with lots of very ordinary and simple interactions: prayer, doing life together, friendship, reading the Word in pairs or small groups... But in these small, incremental steps God grows the Church.

We have a number of services and events to help you gain specific ministry skills, grow your leaders, or develop your team.



Supporting your church in a flourishing prayer life

JACKIE MILLAR
CCCNZ PRAYER COORDINATOR

I am slowly making my way through contacting churches across New Zealand and talking all things prayer!

It's great to hear the wonderful things some churches are doing to build a culture of prayer in their church communities. Things like corporate nights of prayer, teams praying for revival, using social media and various apps to promote prayer during the day for specific needs, prayer breakfasts or dinners and inter-generational prayer meetings where different generations pray for each other. There are many more examples of what's working well, so hop onto our website for more ideas!

We'd love to hear your stories of how God is at work in and through prayer in your church. Please send me an email or get in touch: jackiemillar@cccnz.nz

A few things we can all be praying for: Various local outreach programmes happening across New Zealand, salvations in our communities, spiritual growth in churches and workers for the harvest.



Admin Workshops: Practical Events to develop your Admin Team

DANIELLE DIPROSE
CCCNZ NATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Our Admin Workshops are focused events that practically upskill your leadership and admin team on specific and current issues. Coming up this year we've got the HR & Employment Workshop; helping churches navigate current legal and cultural expectations around employing staff. If your church employs people, or runs an internship program this will be a valuable discussion on best practice, legal matters and spiritual responsibility and care. Later this year we'll be running workshops specialising in finance and in governance.

HR & EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP

28 August | 10am – 4pm | Manurewa Bible Church, Auckland
\$40 (includes lunch)
Webinar \$20

FINANCE WORKSHOP

7 October | 10am - 4pm | Manurewa Bible Church, Auckland
9 October | 10am - 4pm | Bryndwr Chapel, Christchurch
\$40 with a catered lunch provided

An opportunity to develop your church's volunteer youth leaders

Summer School is a week of teaching, spending time with others, and relaxing at Chosen Valley Christian Camp (Auckland) 27-31 January. This is a relaxed event for volunteer youth leaders who want to spend some time unwinding and learning from God's Word together as they prepare for the year ahead.

For more details, visit the Youth Events page on our website: www.cccnz.nz

Scholarships to grow and develop people for service

All Christian people are saved to serve: To serve God, to serve the people of God, and to serve their communities.

3TRUSTS Scholarships have the JH Baldwin Scholarship to see men and women equipped for a lifetime of service in and through the local church through teaching, pastoral and preaching ministries. The David Bay Evangelism Scholarship is also available to see people who have a passion for evangelism trained for service. Both of these scholarships are uniquely for people from CCCNZ and Open Brethren heritage churches.



Rob Morton is the new 3TRUSTS Scholarship Coordinator and sees scholarships as part of the big picture of ministry training: “The key question is: How do we get people serving in ministry and mission? There are many steps along the path; someone needs to become a

Christian, they need to be discipled and grow in faith, they need to be given opportunities to serve in their church, they need to be trained to serve effectively, then some will be encouraged to go further and take on more responsibilities. At this point they will consider training—and look for scholarships to help them get there.”

Rob was raised in the movement—at Church on Vogel in Palmerston North back when it was ‘Roslyn Gospel Chapel’. Rob trained for ministry in Australia before returning to New Zealand where he spent the last decade in pastoral ministry—mostly preaching and teaching, everything from Sunday School classes to Bible studies in rest homes.

Rob is married to Adelle, they have four kids and live in Hastings, Hawke’s Bay. Most recently, Rob has spent time training others, starting regular training events to grow Bible teachers, kids and youth leaders, and new preachers.

At the moment, Rob is preparing to start a church plant in a low-decile area of Hastings, and a key part of this process involves training a ministry apprentice, who will be a key leader in the church plant. “I believe churches are vital in raising up the leaders and missionaries of the future, because it is churches who evangelise, disciple, train and encourage. I am always keen to talk to any church more about this whole process, as well as those who are ready to look at further training and scholarships.”

If you or someone from your church is keen to dip their toes into training for ministry, or maybe do some further study visit www.3trustsscholarships.nz for more info.



Saved to Serve

We caught up with Joshua Irving from Auckland Bible Church on how the JH Baldwin Scholarship is helping him prepare to serve the Church in a variety of ways.

“To see the gospel being shared across these islands is my impetus for choosing to study theology. I was led and discipled as a young believer through the student ministry TSCF, and came to realise the profound impact Christian leadership and discipleship can have on the Church and its witness in Aotearoa.”

Joshua Irving is a recipient of the JH Baldwin Scholarship, and is currently studying towards an undergraduate degree in Applied Theology through Carey Baptist College. Josh and his wife Kaitlyn recently moved back to New Zealand, from Singapore:

“After some time away, we were convinced that the place we’re best equipped to serve the Church is New Zealand, and investing in training seemed like a good place to start.”

Previously, Josh worked for six years as a High School teacher, and five months ago he and Kaitlyn welcomed a baby girl, Eliana.

“I’m convinced that a season of equipping is important to my effectiveness in sharing the gospel, and will prepare me to serve the Church in a variety of ways. For me, it’s a real privilege to study again. The financial consideration is significant and I’m very grateful for the JH Baldwin Scholarship, which has been, for my family, a major provision enabling me to study with real purpose.”

Josh is supported by Auckland Bible Church: “I’ve been able to gain practical experience and insight into ministry by serving in a paid part-time position as the Youth Coordinator, and the church has been generous in their care and support for me to study.”

SERVING YOU



CHURCH PLANTING

Dave Giesbers

Helping churches plant new churches through the assessing, resourcing & coaching of church planters



PRAYER

Jackie Millar

Supporting churches and ministries in a flourishing prayer life



COACHING

Jeremy Suisted

Supporting elders and leaders to coach eldership and leadership teams



PASTORLINK

Kerry Rickard

Growing a network of pastors supporting pastors



SCHOLARSHIPS

Rob Morton

Supporting churches and individuals to pursue ministry training



AUCKLAND COMMUNITY

Lui Ponifasio

Connecting, mobilising and enabling churches for church planting across Auckland



YOUTH

Murray Brown

Supporting local youth ministries through training, coaching and resourcing



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Julie McKinnon

Supporting and resourcing parents and leaders to disciple children and their families



RESOURCING

Danielle Diprose

Health and Safety, Financial Reporting, Compliance, Employment and Cost Saving Resources



EVENTS

Hannah Munro

Coordinating and promoting CCCNZ events around New Zealand



COMMUNICATIONS

Sophia Sinclair

Communications, Rongopai magazine, newsletters, social media and website

Our staff team is ably assisted by a group of Regional Enablers. All of our contact details can be found on our website.