



NEWS, ARTICLES AND STORIES

FROM

BAPTIST NZ

APP & WEBSITE

JULY -
AUGUST
2023

This newsletter is a print version of the latest articles published on the Baptist NZ website and app. The app now replaces the Baptist magazine and is available to download on Google play and App Store. For those in the Baptist family who prefer to read hardcopy, check out what God is doing in our faith communities in this newsletter, sent bimonthly to churches. If you have email and would like this document to be emailed to you, sign up to our newsletter at baptist.nz



ERIK SCHILPEROORT AND KATHRYN HESLOP

God at work in people's lives

Back in May, Kathryn Heslop, then Executive Assistant to our Baptist National Leader, talked with Erik Schilperoort, Care Pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church (Tauranga), about the regular baptisms happening there.

Kathryn: Erik, we love hearing from you about the regular Baptisms at Bethlehem Baptist. This is so encouraging, and it has us wondering how many people have Bethlehem Baptist Church seen baptised in the last 12 months?

Erik: Well, in Sunday morning services, 30, and off-site, probably like another five. So, I'd say safely somewhere between 30 and 35, which we're very grateful for.

Kathryn: That is remarkable. So, what's going on? Why are people putting their hands up to be baptised?

Erik: God's been at work here in a number of different ways. We also have people that are moving to Tauranga from other cities or other countries, and some of them are from places like South Africa, where they might have been christened as a baby. Now they're an adult, and they're in a Baptist setting, and it makes them think about adult baptism. So, a number of them are getting baptised. In our church, I have a 'focus on baptism' so I can track with people who are expressing interest in it, and we have systems in place to follow up with people.

We see a number of younger people that are coming to faith through our youth ministry and through Easter Camp and other ways, so they're willing to get baptised. I think also it's just we have a significant prayer base of people praying and interceding, asking God to stir up within people. We're seeing a lot of growth and good



What do we need to know about the Word that shapes us, the World in which our faith is to be lived out, and the Work that we are called to do? Listen to the Word World Work podcast to find out more. Audio episodes online : baptist.nz/podcasts

Do you have any stories of gospel renewal in your community?

You can share them by emailing stories@baptist.org.nz

Feedback

If you would like to give feedback on this newsletter, write to our Communications Director at the Baptist Support Centre: **P O Box 12 149, Penrose, Auckland 1642, New Zealand.**

things happening and people coming to faith, so that's a big part of it.

And then recently, Craig Vernall did a preaching series on the book of Romans, and right after Easter, he did Romans six. Of course, the first ten verses are all about baptism. As part of that, he brought a big strong call to the congregation to respond if, for some reason, you haven't been baptised yet or you need to get baptised. And so, we ran a course right after that and then baptised 18 people in response to that call. As a result of all that, we've had about another dozen people expressing interest, so God's at work right!? Gods at work.

Kathryn: Awesome. So, tell us quickly, why is baptism important to you?

Erik: Well, it's an important part of following Jesus, isn't it. He told us to follow him. We're followers of Jesus, and he himself was baptised, so really, it's just a step of obedience. And I find for people that come to faith; always the Holy Spirit seems to be telling them, you need to get baptised, you need to get baptised. So it's part of just helping people in their faith journey.

It's such an important step of identifying with him, his death and his resurrection. But also, it's a way to publicly declare faith in Jesus. It's great for a person to be doing that, but also, they invite their friends and family members. So, nearly always, we have non-Christian people present, and I love that side of it when those people get impacted by baptisms. I love it here because we celebrate it. We try and make it very special for people to tell their testimony.

Kathryn: How do you make it special? If you've got 30 people putting their hands up, it's got to be a special thing, right?

Erik: We try and do a pretty good process with people beforehand. I run a baptism course and try to get as personal as possible—both one-on-one and in a small group setting. We create a printed certificate. We have some men in our church who are wood carvers, and we supply them with recycled totara timber, and they carve koru. It's a koru taonga that is stained and laser inscribed with their name and the date they got baptised, and then we put a bible verse on there. It helps them remember the day that they committed their life to

Jesus. We love doing baptisms!

Kathryn: Amazing, that's awesome. And I think because you make it so special and you pave the way for them. Because they all tell their testimony, and you make it a real event, it just gains momentum, aye?

Erik: The night we baptised 18 people, they shared their testimony, and honestly, it was one of the most amazing meetings of my entire time here at Bethlehem Baptist. There was not a dry eye in the whole place, and some of the stories were just incredible!—Of God at work in people's lives. It was an electric atmosphere kind of evening that started with some praise and worship, and it was just like a little taste of heaven, really – it was so special.

Honestly, when you work as a pastor, what happened that Sunday was like summiting Everest. You wished everybody could be there. It's one of those moments.

Photo: From Erik Schilperoort, by Charl Louw, of Antony Lee's baptism, May 2023.

PETER FOSTER AND CHARLES HEWLETT Opening Golden Sands Baptist Church building



Has Peter got news for us! Peter Foster, Regional Leader of the Bay of Plenty & Eastland Baptist Association, shares his joy in witnessing the opening of Golden Sands Baptist Church's new building in Pāpāmoa, Tauranga.

I joined in with the celebrations at Golden Sands Baptist Church on the 24-25 June as they opened their new facility. What a place, what a people, what a church.

From the Golden Sands Baptist Church's website:

“Our church started with a few locals who began to

see the Pāpāmoa lights growing further and further down the coastline. They felt that in the midst of this new neighbourhood, God wanted to plant a new worshipping community that would love and serve their neighbours for years to come.

We officially kicked off in a small warehouse on Ashley place in 2018.

Since then, it has been a joy to see our church grow as new people have come to faith and joined the community.

We have only recently completed this new building on the corner of Te Okuroa and Stevenson Drive; that was a whole miraculous story in itself.”

It was fantastic hearing the story of the church up until this point. It was awesome hearing about churches helping churches - association being involved. But one of the things that stood out for me is the amazing things that can happen when we allow people in our churches to run with what God has given them and allow ‘little mustard seeds’ of faith and dreams to establish themselves.

It is right for us to thank our church leaders and leadership teams, they do a great job. But I want to thank all those people who are in our churches who are absolutely committed to seeing Gospel renewal in our community. Thank you for your endeavours, endurance, and get up and go. You are a blessing.

Our Baptist National Leader, Charles Hewlett, joins in:

Together you’ve created something quite remarkable! The joy you will be bringing Jesus right now must be enormous. His people coming together in unity to create a building for his kingdom purposes, a place where he can be worshipped, and his Word, the Bible explained, where all ages can come together for relationship, hospitality and fun. A hub for initiatives to make your local neighbourhoods even better. A shelter for those whose life is hard. A place of peace. Bricks and mortar for the purposes of helping to reconcile all things to God, bringing honour and glory to his name. I have no doubt that Jesus will be observing you today with an enormous smile on his face and much joy in his heart. On behalf of all the Baptist churches in New Zealand, congratulations for all that you have achieved.

A prayer for Golden Sands Baptist Church. Let’s pray together:

Lord, I want to give thanks for the people of God at Golden Sands Baptist Church and the community that they are part of. I give you thanks for their elders, for Colin and the pastoral team, for the many ministry leaders and administrators. Please give them wisdom and courage as they spiritually lead the people here.

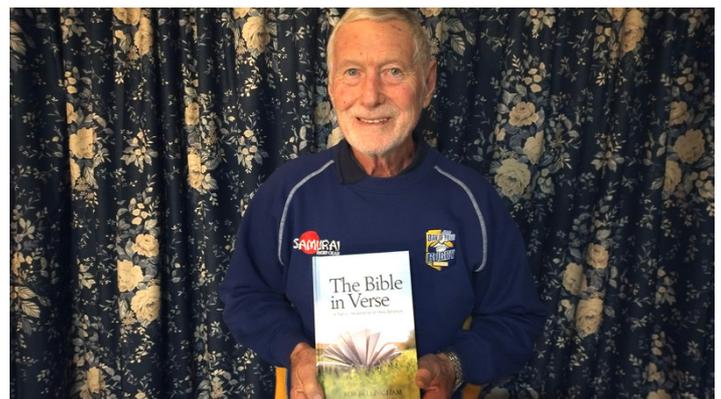
I give thanks for those serving you in their workplaces, for those learning in places of education, parents at home, for the retired ones here. Jesus, pour out your blessing upon them for the way they have honoured you with their lives. Help this faith community to thrive with robust leaders, growing disciples, and healthy resources for effective mission to flow so that gospel renewal can occur in this Bay of Plenty and beyond.

Lord, in the Bible we read, God who began a good work within you will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. May this be true of Golden Sands Baptist Church. We give you thanks for them in the name of Jesus, amen.

Photo: Supplied by Golden Sands Baptist Church

ROB BELLINGHAM

The Bible as a poem



Rob Bellingham, Elder at Rotorua Baptist Church, has released a 1000-page poetic interpretation of the complete Bible. He tells us about his book and inspiration...

It is called “The Bible in Verse” and is subtitled by the American publisher “A Poetic Interpretation of Holy Scripture.”

It’s the complete Bible in rhyming couplets that will resonate with lovers of poetry and hopefully inspire many who don’t currently read the Bible

to re-engage with the message of the most important book in the world. I can imagine a Christian rapper using the script or a songwriter creating a musical version of the Bible's most loved passages.

The Bible is a remarkable book declaring God has a plan for the world. It comprises 66 books written by many individuals and groups over 1500 years. But it has a central theme of the unique birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah of the First Testament and Saviour of the New Testament.

The Bible in Verse has been a labour of love over the last twelve years, during which I had a computer stolen and lost a third of the text. The project began when I sensed the whisper of God suggesting I might retell the story in poetry. When I tried to do so, I found that it was possible with the narratives, history, psalms, theology, doctrine, and even genealogies that make up the holy scriptures.

Psalm 23 is one of the best-known passages of the Bible. In rhyming couplets, it reads:

*"With the Lord as my shepherd, I have all I need,
By quiet streams I've peace, In green pastures I feed.*

*My soul he restores, and right paths of life shows,
At death's door brings relief, in adversity provides.*

*His rod and staff comfort me, oil's on my head,
My cup overflows, I bask in mercy and good.*

*All the days of my life, I'll follow his way,
And in his house forever, I'm blest to stay."*

My background as the writer is farming in Northland, training for the ministry at Baptist College, and serving in New Zealand churches for ten years before a decade of missionary service in India and Bangladesh. I earned a doctorate in Christian Social Ethics from Eastern Baptist Seminary in Philadelphia, USA, in the mid-1980s. I have worked for Tearfund and World Vision and have been the international leader of Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. As a retiree, I enjoy gardening and tennis and completed the Bible in Verse after a terminal cancer diagnosis. Not many treatises of 1000 pages have been penned by New Zealand Christian writers, so I hope and pray this volume may inspire Christians and seekers of truth and evoke a deeper love for God as it has done for me, the writer. *Photo: Supplied by Rob Bellingham.*

GEOFF DIXON

Student accommodation: Baptist Student Hostel – Palmerston North



Geoff Dixon is chair of the Baptist Student Hostel board, as well as member and co-pastor at Hokowhitu Baptist Church in Palmerston North.

Baptist churches and student accommodation

This is the first in a series of articles that feature student accommodation connected to Baptist churches around the country. Our Youth Catalyst, Ethan Miller has a vision of caring for our young people as many move away from home for tertiary education:

Relocating, financial strain, academic stress – student life is tough! Imagine churches actively supporting students through meals, mentorship, and integrating them into their community. We need churches who intentionally invest and provide safe spaces for students!

The Baptist churches around the country that provide student accommodation are part of realising this vision of care and hospitality to our young people. We have started an online list of Baptist church run student accommodation around New Zealand and this series of articles is to help raise their profile. If you're a parent, grandparent, friend, youth leader, etc, please share this with your young people.

In this article we hear from the **Baptist Student Hostel (BSH) in Palmerston North**, which is known for its exceptional care, good accommodations, and thriving Christian values-based community of students.

History

The Hostel roots go back to the central district Baptist association of churches in the 1960's when Baptist church members saw an opportunity to minister to young people attending tertiary

institutes in Palmerston North. After many years of fundraising, planning and praying for a place to accommodate students the “Baptist Youth Hostel” opened its doors to students in 1972 – see the image above of that first year of students.

In 1973 the students’ fees were \$15 per week and Baptist churches from neighbouring regions, right up to Napier, supplied weekend coverage for hostel managers to have a break. The hostel was blessed to have many volunteers from Feilding, Palmerston North Central and Hokowhitu Baptist Churches over the years. The 20 students always looked forward to the “summer harvest” services when food was donated from churches to the hostel.

Fast forward to today, with 33 students’ rooms, a 4-bedroom flat for people with special diets, and 2 flats for up to 9 students: great food and quality pastoral care are our greatest selling points.

Recent student, Samantha Savage sums this up nicely:

The hostel was an awesome choice for my first-year accommodation. I made lifelong friends, ate great food and enjoyed hostel-wide events like paintball and bowling. The Managers are awesome managers, super friendly and are always keen for a chat - no matter the topic! It was also super ideal being alongside people studying similar courses to me.

Our Space

BSH provides a place where students can transition from home into full-time study, in a safe space with quality care, great food, and a cosy and clean living environment.

Greta Calvert, recent student:

I would 100% recommend staying here. It is an awesome, safe space with fantastic people and you are almost guaranteed to make lifelong friends. It is in such a convenient spot and it’s very refreshing to take a step back from the university to be able to effectively study at home.

Close to Everywhere

The Hostel is centrally located, close to Massey University, UCOL (Universal College of Learning) and town. It only takes 5-10 minutes to walk into the centre of the city where UCOL is situated. The bus stop is right outside our front door, and the free bus service to Massey University for tertiary students goes past every 10-15 minutes.

The hostel is the perfect place to stay. Good food, good people and reasonable pricing. I always feel so comfortable and welcome here. The bus system to Massey just outside of the hostel is great too! WT T.

Everything you need

BSH is a great alternative to living in the University halls; individually heated single, modern, purpose-built bedrooms complete with study desk, and access to unlimited fast internet. Every day you can expect delicious breakfast and lunch provisions, and a fully catered evening meal. Lounge and recreation rooms are great spaces to enjoy socialising with residents, an opportunity to foster relationships that often turn into lifelong friendships.

Add to this list the hostel-wide events such as the annual pool (table) championship, table tennis, unlimited off-street parking, and laundry facilities, you’ll find we have everything a tertiary student may need.

Joshua Lyford, student:

This is my second year at the Baptist hostel and I’m feeling so at home here. Amazing people that you can interact with on the daily. Amazing managers that care so much and cook amazing food. Lots of hostel activities. An overall amazing place.

Contact Us

If you’re interested to know more, feel free to give us a call: Hostel Managers (06) 355 5107 or find out more online, including how to apply: bsh.nz

Photo: Provided by BSH

JONAN CASTILLON

Reflections on perpetuating Oamaru Baptist Church’s founding anniversary celebrations



Church marks 140 years

ARROW.KOEHLER
@oamarumail.co.nz
PJJF cadet reporter

One hundred and forty is an anniversary not many people get to see but for the Oamaru Baptist Church, it is just the beginning.

Pastor Jonan Castillon said the church’s founding values and spirit of the congregation had kept it running for 140 years, and would keep it running for another 140.

“Our faith brings us together,” he said.

Mr Castillon said one of the biggest changes the church has experienced was the range of ethnicities.

When Mr Castillon started last

Same but different . . . Oamaru Baptist Church pastor Jonan Castillon celebrates the church’s 140th anniversary and hopes to see it continue

Jonan Castillon is Pastor of Oamaru Baptist Church and part of the Baptist NZ Editorial Advisory

Group. This story is reproduced from the Gleniti Baptist Church Multicultural Response blog.

How does a Baptist church recovering from a diminished membership and ministry slump celebrate its 140th Founding Anniversary? Many members left because of the uncertainty that Oamaru Baptist Church was facing. They thought that Oamaru Baptist Church's life was about to end.

Among the few who remained, two proposed selling the church's property and members moving on to attend other Christian churches. However, nine people resolutely stood for Oamaru Baptist Church's existence. Their firm stand was that they would remain "unless the Lord removes us from this place." The Lord answered their prayers for a pastor who would lead them in their church life journey, among others.

The above was the situation when I started as interim pastor in June 2022. Since then, Oamaru Baptist Church has experienced a gradual revival and growing back.

Below are my reflections as we celebrate Oamaru Baptist Church's 140th Founding Anniversary.

1. Publish in the local paper that Oamaru Baptist Church is still existing

What came to my mind a few months ago when I was thinking about Oamaru Baptist Church's 140th year is to let the community know that "we are still here."

As part of Oamaru Baptist Church's 140th founding anniversary celebrations, we advertised the event on Oamaru Mail and also requested a news feature written about it.

I am happy that the governance team approved my request for Oamaru Baptist Church to sponsor an advertisement on Oamaru Mail.

When I started at Oamaru Baptist Church last June 2022, I learned a lot about the church through the Oamaru Mail archives online (Papers Past).

So, I thought, why not get an advertisement to thank Oamaru Mail for publishing about the church and its ministries over the years and inform the district that Oamaru Baptist Church is still here for them?

Pretty timely because the paper has an ongoing winter's special, so we paid half the price for a half-

page advertisement.

2. Only God knows how many years His church will last

The 23 pioneering members of Oamaru Baptist Church on 13 August 1883 had no idea how many years or that the church would still exist today. Neither do we.

We can only pray for God's grace and mercy to sustain His church, now and in the years to come.

I hope and pray that the photo and article about the Oamaru Baptist Church published today, 18 August 2023, will be an extant source of inspiration for the present members in the next 140 years.

3. The Lord formed a team to sustain Oamaru Baptist Church

A church governance team devised a timely intervention in Oamaru Baptist Church's existence as a church. The group appointed and commissioned me as pastor of Oamaru Baptist Church on 12 June 2022.

Thanks to the NZ Baptist governance team, composed of the Otago Southland Baptist Association Regional Leader, Rachel Murray and the former Canterbury and Westland Regional Leader, Kim Peters, and Kānuka Hopestill Limited General Manager, Bradley Nicolson. Kim retired in March 2022. I became part of the team after my installation.

Bevan Sharpe, Oamaru Baptist Church's passionate deacon/leader, provides critical help on the ground as I am based in Timaru. Other members participated in the children, youth, adult, music, and prayer ministries.

Behind all these is the valuable involvement of Hopevale Trust, which financially supports my pastoral work at Oamaru Baptist Church. Thanks to Gleniti Baptist Church, our home church in Timaru, where I work as Multicultural Response Ministry Coordinator, that "sent" me and my family to work with Oamaru Baptist Church.

Unknowingly, a local mission model developed while implementing a multicultural response ministry, which includes working with Oamaru Baptist Church.

4. Celebrating Oamaru Baptist Church's founding values

Today, we say the same founding values

Oamaru Baptist Church members discussed during its Centennial celebration in 1983.

Today we thank God for those early pioneer members who, with indomitable courage, steadfast faith and sanctified vision, established the Baptist Cause in this town. We bless our God for every remembrance of them. Their faith and their hopes we share as a glorious heritage. God grant that we prove worthy of the trust they have left us. - In retrospect by David H. Stewart

We celebrate the church's founding values because they last. People and buildings don't.

Following the Ministry Appreciation and Participation Toolkit, we mapped out Oamaru Baptist Church's faith-wisdom. The result is the faith-wisdom statement below.

Oamaru Baptist Church must plan and implement programs that teach, train, and track the founding values of every member (dynamic discipleship).

- steadfast faith
- indomitable courage
- noble vision
- hope, and
- generosity

Closing thoughts

Although the Oamaru Mail reporter didn't mention "discipleship" in her article, Oamaru Baptist Church focuses on the dynamic discipleship of the children, youth, and family to ensure its continuous existence, now and in future generations.

Below is our pledge, which we adopted from the "In Retrospect" article David H. Stewart wrote for the Oamaru Baptist Church Centenary.

We commit, with the help and guidance of the Almighty God, to being steadfastly loyal to the foundation principles of the Evangelical faith, the distinctive historic Baptist witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, the freedom of the individual personality before God, and the right of all to freedom of conscience, now and in the years to come.

We draw inspiration from Hebrews 12:1-2, which says:

Therefore, since such a great cloud of witnesses surrounds us, let us throw off everything that hinders

and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

When we perpetuate celebrating the church's founding anniversary, we take the time to look back, see the present, and look towards the future that is always bright in God's loving care.

As a church, we continue to work for the Lord as long as it's day, teaching, training, and tracking Oamaru Baptist Church members to become Christians of steadfast faith, indomitable courage, noble vision, hope, and generosity.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY! AMEN.

KEVIN ROBERTSON

Salt of the Earth: The rest is history



Columnist Kevin Robertson, or 'Kev the Rev' as some people call him, is a gumboot-wearing-chainsaw-wielding-farm-hack and pastor-of-people at Te Awamutu Baptist Church in the beautiful Waikato region. Salt of the earth: it's what Jesus says we are. Paul the Apostle encourages us to season our conversations with salt. This column is about that: telling stories of salty people, inspiring us to imagine something we haven't thought of before, or helping us taste something differently. Porridge is better with salt!

It's the ordinary, extraordinary people that need to be celebrated. Like Huhana. What a woman! Every time we get together she comes with an agenda – something she wants to ask me about... but to get there we kōrero about life. Like I don't mean small talk about the weather and politics, I mean kōrero about life – like for an hour and a half and then she says, "Hey I was going to

ask your opinion about this idea I have”... and in return I say “is this the reason why you wanted to meet up”. “Yes”. Brilliant, and the conversation continues. So we yak through a couple of hours and the multiple coffees are always great.

Hu runs a life group in her church. Its theme is ‘Living Simply’. She draws from the early days of her life when she had to live simply just to live. Hu has a passion to further enhance others appreciation of this lost art in a society that revels in ‘more’ and ‘self-entitlement’. When I listen, I mean take time and listen to her, I hear the echo of Paul when he writes “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” And this contentment is evidenced in her countenance. Although she has lived a life, she looks as if she is one who has had it easy – this is the work of Holy Spirit!

Hu’s troubles started early in a somewhat difficult home. Not an ideal upbringing and, as a result of these hardships, she ended up in a marriage that was – let’s say, less than what it should have been. But Hu already had learned the art of making the best of a tricky situation. Her saving grace was her early introduction to Jesus and a lifetime commitment to him as a follower. Working on farms, which is demanding in itself, she was also raising a young family with little support. Eventually things hit rock bottom in the doomed relationship and Hu found herself as a solo mum with three little “tag on’s”. Working and raising a young family was fertile ground for Hu to learn the gift of simplicity and contentment.

Never a shrinking violet, she made the most of every opportunity – raising her kids – working – and talking to the Christian boys in the flat next door! There were three of these blokes, not that she was interested coz they were all too young and immature. And anyway, she was older and had her three blessings, so she knew she was safe... till one of them started to talk to her a little bit more than the rest of the blokes. So an encounter with the Holy Spirit was catching up with her, which took her blindside! She had met this bloke’s mother... and one day when they were yakking over the fence, Holy Spirit whispered to Hu “your welcome, this is your mother [in-law]”. Gulp! What the heck?

Inevitably this led to a hesitant kōrero with the boy’. Yes, there was interest from both towards the other, and as they say, the rest is history! History which started when they got married 13 weeks later. Apparently they decided that they wanted to marry, so why wait. The boy became a man, not only because he got married, but because he also inherited a family of three kids, which he accepted as his own to the best of his ability. And the rest is history. What a family, and I’ve had the privilege of meeting with one of these beautiful kids who’s all grown up now.

But wait there’s more. As the new bride and groom journeyed in life together, Hu got to know her ‘mother’ in-law. Mum [in-law] eventually plucked up the courage to tell Hu that ages back before Hu and hubby got hitched, that the two of them were having a yak over the back fence and God spoke to her. As ‘mother’ was talking to the then solo mum she heard God say “look, this is your daughter”. It came out of the blue as she hadn’t realised that her son was ‘interested’ in the girl next door. The rest is history.

It’s not just Hu’s determination, strength and gentleness that impresses me. Nor is it the romance of the story, but it’s the reminder that God is so intimately woven into our stories as the God that speaks and the One who is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. It makes me think: when was the last time I heard His whisper? When was the last time I was at rest and knew contentment?

Cover photo: Kevin's legs with his gumboots and chainsaw.

If you would like to read more entries in Kevin's column, ask someone in your local church to print them for you from: baptist.nz/articles-news-stories.

PAUL ASKIN

Pondering: How many chaplains does the church really need

This Pondering comes from Paul Askin, a member of Rangiora Baptist Church in North Canterbury. Paul describes himself as a hunter, author, and Baptist representative on and chair of the Chaplains Defence Advisory Council. He has been pastor, church

planter, Treaty of Waitangi supporter, farmer, profligate spender of money on books, informal community chaplain, occasional preacher, co-leader of Te Raranga (an inter-church network in Christchurch), big-time husband and family man, and biggest deal: apprentice of Jesus.



Introduction

Integrating chaplaincy into the wider family of our collective of churches is something I have been thinking about for a considerable time. At the Chaplain's Day at the National Hui last year, our National Leader, Charles Hewlett, asked me to reflect on this integration. I was very glad to do so; it is an important issue. What follows is my contribution to what I hope will be an informative and constructive discussion. The aim is to strengthen faith communities as they bring gospel renewal to all sorts of people and places.

Integration

Since chaplaincy is, in one sense, a small subset of church, I want to start by making some observations about church. As I read Scripture, church is the community of God's people, his disciples; people committed to God's ongoing process of spiritual transformation, which changes the way we are and think. Church is people growing into the fullness of the stature of Jesus.

Integral to this life of discipleship, and a natural, inevitable outworking of it, is an influence and sometimes an impact in the lives of people the disciple encounters in the everyday course of their life, people who are not yet followers of Jesus.

A critical responsibility of leaders within the church is forming and equipping the saints for ministry work. We are to teach disciples to obey all the commands Jesus gave us.

All of us are formed by the world we live in. When we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus, we commence a process of reformation into

being a different person, living a new and different life. Using Paul's words, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Three verses on, Paul writes these words about our role as disciples, "So we are Christ's ambassadors,... God is making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20). An outcome of discipleship is that we each become, "a letter, written not but with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of God" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Mike Breen writes, "If you make disciples, you always get the church. But If you make a church, you rarely get disciples." He goes on to say, "We need to understand the church as the effect of discipleship and not the cause. If you set out to build the church, there is no guarantee that you will make disciples. It is far more likely that you will create consumers who depend on the spiritual services that religious professionals provide...If you know how to disciple people well, you will always get mission... That's simply what disciples do." [1]

As churches work with the Spirit in the spiritual reformation of disciples, disciples are equipped and prepared to be Christ's ambassadors. Or, as I like to say in this context, to be chaplains in all the varied life situations and contexts they find themselves in. Often these ambassadors or chaplains will be the only person God has available to use in the life of some person or group of people, be it in a home, a street, a workplace, a sports team, an educational facility, a shopping mall car park, or wherever.

This understanding impacts our understanding and practice of church. Rather than seeing church gatherings as events to inspire and encourage believers to survive another week in the world and to attract new believers, church is the community where disciples learn how to abide in Christ, to live in the Spirit, to joyfully wear the yoke Jesus invites us to take up with him, and to demonstrate spiritual wisdom and maturity in all situations, however challenging they may be.

This understanding also impacts our view of mission. Rather than seeing mission as something done primarily in the centre, when the church gathers for an event, mission happens naturally and organically on the fringes, carried out by a

multitude of transformed disciples, most of whom are unsung and unpaid.

There are many barriers to Christian belief in our current, increasingly secular environment. The tide of public perception is turning away from us. Sometimes, sadly, we contribute to this trend. There are many powers and principalities actively working against us, but with the resourcing God gives and with prayer, we are anything but defeated.

The letters from Christ, written not with pen and ink (or on a screen) but with the Spirit of God, will be read. The appeal of Christ made through his ambassadors will be heard, despite the opposition sometimes encountered. And people will respond, becoming transformed disciples themselves. This can happen, is happening, and has happened, even in times of life-threatening persecution, when church leaders have appointed bouncers to be at the door of church gatherings to keep strangers out!

In a church where the vision and practice are focused on growing and equipping all disciples to be ambassadors or chaplains in their daily lives, in the situations and communities where they live out their lives, “professional” chaplains can be valuable and encouraging exemplars within the church community. For professional chaplains, this responsibility is good; it’s a helpful reminder to them to keep on course as representatives of the living God.

Using Peter Berger’s famous words, chaplains, pastors, and all church members together can enable the church to be a “plausibility structure” [2], authenticating the claims of the gospel of Jesus. Dennis Hollinger hit the nail on the head when he wrote, “Post moderns can best understand a holy, loving, just, forgiving, life-giving God of grace when they see a holy, loving, just, forgiving, life-giving community founded on the grace of God.” [3].

Integrating chaplaincy and church life becomes much more straightforward when we all focus on obeying all that Jesus taught us and on being reformed into authentic disciples, and then being available to be used by God at any time, in any place, in the spiritual journey of others. Often, a disciple will be unaware of their influence; they are

just living their normal life in Christ, but for the people watching, it may well be anything but normal. It could be the catalyst to jar them into a new way of thinking and living.

I work and pray toward the equipping and encouraging of as many disciples as I can, disciples who are Christ’s ambassadors or chaplains wherever life takes them. And I am amazed at the many privileged, apparently random opportunities I am given to be an ambassador of Christ or his chaplain, especially in my relationships with non-believers and my connections with Christian brothers and sisters.

Further thoughts

Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy is very outward-focused. Chaplains usually work on their own or in very small teams among a far larger group of people, most of whom do not own Jesus as Lord.

The chaplain accepts and welcomes a position with little or no institutional power, accepts being an anomaly, and accepts the possibility of being misunderstood, ignored, or even rejected.

In this context, the chaplain quietly builds relationships and seeks to grow trust, taking a long-term view rather than looking for short-term results. This is true even if the chaplain anticipates that they might have just one conversation with a person. The chaplain accepts that they may well see “little return” for much of the time and effort they invest in people. This doesn’t mean good things don’t happen; it’s just that such outcomes are often unseen by the chaplain and certainly by the church.

We trust that a chaplain lives a deep and meaningful life of faith in God in front of the people watching them. For the chaplain, building trust and respect is a priority, however long that might take. As the stuff of life unfolds, for disciples in their own lives and in the lives of the people they interact with, questions are asked, decisions are made, and intellectual and emotional commitments are arrived at as steps on a journey.

When viewed from the perspective of organised church institutions, chaplaincy is on the fringe. It is out on the edges, not easily visible to church structures, and even less easily controlled by church hierarchies. While I think this situation should be welcomed as a continuation of the

gossiping of the gospel by countless nameless heroes in the early days of the church, I believe it is not valued in our world in the way that the New Testament celebrates such a contribution.

The temptation for chaplains, as I see it, is to simply be wonderful, kind, caring people with a Christian flavour, a Christian persona, and a low expectation of significant spiritual transformation in the lives of the people they minister. This approach is, of course, an easier road to acceptance.

Church

Many church leaders and members use measures like attendance at Sunday services, number of baptisms and financial figures as indicators of health and success. These measures are often used to determine how a church is “doing.” People want their church to feel like it is tracking well and has a good future. Usually, they will be committed to some degree, at least, to helping ensure a positive outlook for the church. Leaders normally do what they can to help ensure a viable church moving forward. No one wants to be part of turning out the lights and closing the doors for keeps on a church.

Hence a tendency to develop people trained and educated to build, serve and lead the organisation of the church, leaving these people untrained and ill-equipped when it comes to the life-changing process of making disciples.

Churches tend to look for an identifiable return on the efforts made in the wider, non-believing community they are a part of. Understandably they prefer these returns to happen in the shorter term rather than the long term.

Consequently, their interaction with their wider community is often structured for quick results rather than long-term impact. Relationship building and the growth of trust take time. I believe the desire for a ‘quick return on effort’ commonly leads to a reliance primarily on intellectual or emotional persuasion. I think it’s assumed, not always correctly, that relationship-building will come later.

The temptation for many churches, again as I see it, and drawing on personal experience, is to focus on whatever it is felt might help increase numbers in the church. However, gaining church

attendees is not necessarily the same as making disciples. Sometimes it becomes all too apparent that these two outcomes are very different. The experience of many churches over the recent years of the COVID-19 pandemic bears this out.

Making disciples

Now let’s turn our attention to making disciples. I contend that Jesus’s command, “Go and make disciples,” has often been re-interpreted as “Go and build the church.” But that is not the command! Jesus said he would build his church, and nothing would defeat him. He told us to make disciples, baptise them, and teach them to obey all he commanded. Sadly, I believe that his instruction to teach disciples to obey all his commands is regularly overlooked and even ignored. This has been called the Great Omission! [4]. Of course, before anything else happens, the disciple-maker must be an authentic disciple themselves! The initial focus must be on the disciple maker’s own transformation into Christ’s likeness. Why would anyone choose to join us if we are not demonstrably different?

I think a lesson of church history is that authentic disciples are an irresistible force for change and spiritual growth, even in times of savage persecution. Sadly, another lesson of history is that disciples in name only regularly bring the church into disrepute.

When Paul wrote his letter to the new believers in Colossae, he described mature Christians as those who would be “filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9,10).

People who are genuinely being reformed by Jesus, becoming grace-filled, humble and courageous, resilient in the face of suffering, forgiving and loving like him, can trust the Spirit to be active in transformative ways in the lives of the people among whom they serve Christ.

Harmonising chaplaincy and church life first requires a common commitment for believers to be genuine disciples. Then they work with God in the power and wisdom of the Spirit to make disciples.

Christ’s ambassadors or chaplains need

churches they can confidently introduce enquirers to, churches where Christ's astonishing beauty and mystery are unmistakably revealed, churches where enquirers will be assured of a genuine welcome and the offer of an understandable pathway into discipleship.

What chaplaincy can bring to this relationship with church is the understanding and practice of relationship building, the value of real trust and love, and an appreciation of the patient ferment of the Spirit.

“The Christians (of the first centuries) believed that God is patient and that Jesus visibly embodied patience. And they concluded that trusting in God, they should be patient – not controlling events, not anxious or in a hurry, and never using force to achieve their ends...As we ponder patience, we will come closer to understanding the resilience and distinctive lifestyle of the early Christians that led to their growth in numbers.” [5].

Churches can bring deeply formed disciples, who are the resource for forming new disciples. Churches can also bring kingdom life, a vital resource because it's almost impossible to grow disciples outside of Christian community. Churches are God's plan and place for the reformation of people out of discipleship in the world to discipleship in the kingdom.

It is vital that churches regularly monitor themselves, checking that their understanding of church aligns with the priorities we see in the New Testament. Churches today, I believe, are all too often unthinkingly immersed in a Christendom understanding of church life and function. This differs markedly from a pre-Christendom understanding or from what I think is the rapidly emerging post-Christendom environment.

Churches and chaplains are called to the same life and ministry, described as Christ's ambassadors (chaplains) through whom God appeals to people to return to him. When the church is being the church, many people are ready, prepared and equipped to take up organised chaplaincy positions because they are already living and functioning organically as chaplains, infiltrating their communities in word, sign and deed with the good news of new life now, in Jesus.

Recommendations for consideration

- Increase the emphasis on the intentional formation of disciples in our churches, starting with our leaders. Consider this statement from Dallas Willard: “Every church needs to be able to answer two questions. One: Do we have a plan for making disciples? Two, Does our plan work?”
- Encourage all disciples to see themselves as kingdom agents (chaplains) in the settings where they are. Intentionally equip them with the attitudes, skills, gifts and spiritual wisdom required to function in this way.
- Nurture the practice of “faithful presence,” which is “the incarnation of a kind of leadership that realises in the relationships we have, in the tasks we undertake, and within the actual places (both physical and social) we inhabit, the shalom that comes from God and that is God in the person of Jesus Christ.” [6]
- Resist the temptation to structure things in such a way that the church organisation absorbs too much of the disciples' time and effort. Free people to invest in the lives of people they are among outside the church community. Celebrate these activities, and tell the stories. Value the fringe!
- Resist the temptation to truncate the gospel into a message focusing on little more than personal sins forgiven and the promise of a place in heaven.
- Provide training for chaplains, including courses at Carey Baptist College, but resolutely resist the temptation to over-professionalise chaplaincy. Large numbers of effective volunteers, trained and trusted, being ambassadors of Christ wherever they are, are a force for the gospel like nothing else.
- Develop an appreciation of the patient ferment of the Spirit.
- Encourage all church leadership groups to actively expect their pastoral staff to participate for half a day a week in a chaplaincy role which fits each pastor's interests and abilities. This needs to be part of their job description. Most often, it will be a voluntary role. This kind of regular exposure to interaction with the wider community will

profoundly benefit the people the chaplain serves in this way and, without a doubt, will benefit the supporting church community.

- Encourage serious theological reflection around issues like freedom, truth, justice, the nature of the gospel, the determining ideas and philosophies in the wider community, leadership, pastoral intelligence, creation care, identity, reconciliation, worship, the nature of the church and mission in a post-Christendom world. Intentionally grow a culture where questions are welcomed.
- Actively reject the temptation to tend toward Constantinian understandings and practices, including the desire for power and domination and politicising issues. Instead, understand our identity as that of exiles and aliens in the world on the one hand, living stones being built into a spiritual house indwelt by the Spirit on the other.
- Be certain not to allow the church institution to become an idol. It happens much more easily than many people think!

References

1. Mike Breen. "Building a Discipling Culture." 2009 p 11, 12
2. James Davison Hunter. "To Change The World. The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World." 2010 p202
3. Nancy Pearcey. "Saving Leonardo." 2010 p 276
4. Dallas Willard. "The Great Omission, Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings On Discipleship." 2006
5. Alan Kreider. "The Patient Ferment of the Early Church. The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire." 2016 p 2
6. James Davison Hunter. "To Change The World. The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World." 2010 p269

Photo: supplied by Paul Askin

If you would like to read more *Pondering* articles, ask someone in your local church to print them for you from: baptist.nz/articles-news-stories.

HELEN BRERETON

Reviewing the ethics of our leaders

Helen Brereton is a Transitions Pastor for the Baptist Union of New Zealand and has recently finished a period with Nelson Baptist Church.

Did you know our pastors, chaplains, kaiārahi Māori, and ministry and mission leaders have ethical principles and guidelines that they commit to upholding if they have Baptist Registration? Our

process is a voluntary annual commitment with the aim of ensuring those who minister in, or on behalf of the Baptist Union of New Zealand do so in response to the call of the Holy Spirit and actively seek to maintain their:

- own holistic well-being
- personal, relational and professional integrity and accountability
- ongoing growth and learning
- organisational safety
- an ongoing connection with the wider Baptist movement/whānau

The current Ethical Principles and Guidelines for pastors of New Zealand Baptist Churches has six 'principles', and says:

As a follower of Jesus Christ, called by God to proclaim the gospel, and gifted by the Holy Spirit to be a pastor of His church, I dedicate myself to conduct my ministry within a New Zealand Baptist church according to the principles and guidelines set forth in this code of ethics:

1. I will serve my local church with diligence and integrity
2. I will maintain good relationships with other pastors
3. I will be intentional and responsible in caring for myself
4. I will care for my family household
5. I will support my denomination
6. I will be a good citizen

These guidelines were established in the year 2000.

The purpose of this important document is to enhance wellbeing, safety and dignity for our faith communities and leaders.



The CECAG (Code of Ethics-Conduct Advisory Group) has been commissioned by our governing-group-between-Assemblies/Hui; Assembly Council to revise our Ethical Principles and Guidelines as the current document does not adequately serve the

needs of our faith communities and our kaiārahi Māori, chaplains, ministry and mission leaders, Baptist entity leaders and pastors.

Over the last two weeks, work began on revising the Ethical Principles and Guidelines document for Baptist leaders, aiming to have a new revision ready for the 2024-2025 Baptist Leaders Registration cycle that will begin in November 2024.

Our first two meetings have focused on identifying core ethical domains and developing a consultation plan so we can ensure there is a breadth of voices involved in the development and structure of the updated Code of Ethics. And from early August we will start meeting with different groups within our New Zealand Baptist family of churches.

Photo: supplied by Helen Brereton. The CECAG: Steven Goulstone (Pastor), Karen Warner (National Support Centre), Pete Olds (Chaplain), Catharina Siraa (National Support Centre), Helen Brereton (Specialist Interim Pastor), Rachel Renata (Kaiārahi Māori).

CHRIS BERRY

Update: The next property in our college's unfolding story



Further to our announcement of 1 February 2023, this is an update of our plans around the sale of the properties.

For some years, our theological and pastoral leadership training college, Carey Baptist College, has been exploring how it might invest or develop its campus at 473/475 Great South Road, Penrose (Auckland). The primary objective is to generate significant new income streams to support the ongoing work of Carey in training leaders for our faith communities. It has become apparent, over

time, that the best course of action is to sell the current campus and move to another site. The current property is jointly owned by Carey and the Baptist Union of New Zealand. The Baptist National Support Centre, Arotahi and the Northern Baptist Association are co-located with Carey on the site. We believe it is in the best interests of all these groups to remain co-located on the same site, enabling stronger relationship, clearer communication, and better stewardship of our collective resources.

The process of marketing the existing site and searching for a new location was due to begin in February 2023. This was paused while we investigated opportunities for a plan change on the site. Having completed this, we are now planning on putting the property on the market in early August 2023 and recommencing our search for our next home.

It is likely that when we sell, we will take a two-year lease back from the new owners to give opportunity to identify a new site and complete any fit-out that might be required.

JO HOOD

Curious: Revealing Jesus

Curious, by Jo Hood, is a monthly column. Jo is the Visionary/CEO of mainly Ministries, an organisation that remains curious as they resource and support local churches, church plants, missional communities, and Christian schools to connect with whānau in the community.

To be confident in our quest to reveal Jesus, I'm curious – is there something that can guide us? Whether you're connecting with whānau/families in your neighbourhood or in your church, with work colleagues, with school friends or university mates, wherever your life takes you, you can reveal Jesus. If you're wondering, How? Here's a sentence for your consideration:

Together, creating joy-filled communities of belonging where Jesus can be revealed

We say this describes what mainly Ministries does best when partnering with the local church or community of faith. Let's break this down.

Together

We need team. Connecting with our community, our neighbourhood, and our workplace needs

many hands, many minds, many hours, many laughs, and many prayers.

We need our community of faith. To pray. To resource. To participate.

We need our community. Who else can we involve? There are others who want our local community to flourish – like the council or agencies working with the same group of people. There may be others in our neighbourhood, learning community, or workplace who are followers of Jesus who want to become involved.

We need to offer ways for those whom we serve to contribute their ideas, their time, their resources. Rather than the team provide the basket of non-perishable food for whānau/a family going through a tough time, ask everyone if they'd like to contribute.

We need the Holy Spirit. To prompt us. For discernment. To highlight need.

Creating joy-filled communities of belonging

Community is what so many are craving post-lockdowns. You might feel it's done and dusted. But research states that many people have lost friendships, are a little anxious about new situations, haven't got the energy to bounce back in quite the same way, or in the case of mainly Ministries, are new to parenting and don't know how they can connect.

A mainly Ministries' partner told us of tamaiti/a child who continually ran around, disrupting sessions. His Mum, Penelope, didn't do anything about his behaviour. Getting advice from someone at church, the Team Leader talked to Penelope privately, asking if one of the team contribute to their experience by concentrating time on her son, Mason, and giving her a break. The following week, Mason fell asleep in the arms of the Team Member during the session! Penelope appreciated the gift of personal space in her week and began to flourish.

Joy is a gift. It requires us to be joy-filled, so much so we're overflowing. It requires each of those on the team to be joy-filled, working together like hand and glove. It requires us to provide a place of joy, where people will see authenticity and vulnerability because we count it all joy.

How can we create a community of belonging? Through welcoming everyone. Making a place that

has no boundaries to jump over. A place that's good for people's emotional well-being. A place where people tell us their news and we not only listen, we remember and check in with them again. Not obtrusively but with care and encouragement. We create belonging when we recognise and acknowledge strengths.

One of our partners recognised a love for photography that one Mum had. Each theme day, Vicky was asked if she'd like to be the photographer. She'd arrive early, with her two tamariki/children, eager to contribute. So early in fact that we'd be in karakia/prayer for the morning. Opening the prayer circle, Vicky and her young ones were invited to thank God for the day too. The circle disbanded with everyone looking forward to what God had in store.

Where Jesus can be revealed

How do we make our faith tangible? By speaking it out as a natural part of our everyday. Inviting conversation about faith and creating a safe place for questions to be asked. Safe places require us to ask more questions than try to give answers. How do we know where to contribute to the lives of whānau/families? By watching where God is already working and joining Him in that. A family in need – participating and praying a blessing as we do so. Inviting people to join us for kai/a meal in our home. Jesus ate with a lot of different people. Most of us are blessed with homes. Let's ask others to join us at our table.

How do we, as team, invest in each other? Let's take an example from a Baptist church team who meet for an intentional time of prayer. After the session, they break into twos, chatting and listening. Then pray. This allows the team to be stronger and in turn, they give more care to whānau. This team also used the Five Love Languages to both equip them and strengthen their bond.

To reveal Jesus requires us to take His claims seriously, to live out His way of living, to bless others ahead of our own wants, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us, and to create space for people to explore faith as we live alongside them. I'm curious as to what resonates with you as you ponder, Together, creating joy-filled communities of belonging where Jesus can be revealed.

By the way, we change names and details to keep stories as anonymous as possible.

Photo: supplied by mainly Ministries, from iStock

If you would like to read more entries in Jo's column, ask someone in your local church to print them for you from baptist.nz/articles-news-stories

Getting to know...

Bradley Nicolson



In this column, we discover more about our Baptist whānau, meeting someone in our team of 40,000 each post. This week we are getting to know Bradley Nicolson, General Manager of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church's Kānuka Hopestill Limited – Supporting churches and charitable trusts with property, finance and administrative services.

What is something you think everyone should experience at least once in their life?

Snorkelling/Diving. I have been blessed to experience the underwater worlds of the Great Barrier Reef, French Polynesia and Fiji.

If you could be a pro at any one thing, what would it be?

Snowboarder. I find this question hard as I enjoy and follow so many sports, but Shawn White and Zoi Sadowski-Synnott always look like they are having a blast.

What is a random interest that has completely nothing to do with your study or work?

Tropical Fish Keeping. Fish have long been an interest of mine, and I have kept fish myself as pets since I was 12. My admiration of fish started with my great grandparents' fish tank on visits to their house in Mosgiel.

What is the oddest fact you know?

A survey launched by a British mathematics writer

found that 7 is the world's favourite number. These were the favoured numbers from a survey of over 30,000 people: 1st=7, 2nd=3, 3rd=8. Personally, my favourite number is 8.

What is the most boring thing you've ever done?

I worked at a box factory for a university job. I could calculate the maximum efficiency of each machine depending on the size of the box we were making whilst I hand-fed individual sheets of cardboard into a cutter for eight hours per day.

What is your favourite way of connecting with God?

Anything outdoors, especially in the hills or by the ocean. I always feel closer to God when I am out enjoying the beauty of God's creation.

Can you describe a significant moment when you experienced God's love?

When my daughter Astrid was born, I was able to understand more of what unconditional love is. I loved my daughter before and after she was born, and she doesn't have to do anything to deserve it. We are blessed as sinners to have the unconditional love of our heavenly father.

What is your favourite thing about the neighbourhood where you live?

People! We live as part of the Oxford Terrace Housing Community in the heart of the best city in the best country, but most importantly, we live near most of our best friends.

What do you love most about being Baptist?

I have been blessed to spend the past 20 years at Wilson Street and Oxford Terrace Baptist Churches. My love for being Baptist is shaped by the many blessings I have seen and been part of in these two faith communities. I have loved seeing the fruit from the priesthood of all believers discerning the mind of Christ in local faith communities. Local mission, youth, children, global mission, and housing justice have all been key parts of my Baptist experience. In an attempt to summarise, our love for the Bible and Jesus stirs us to be radical in our love for people and places.



Please recycle or pass on this newsletter