



NEWS, ARTICLES AND STORIES

FROM

BAPTIST NZ

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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



JACQUI CAETANO

Becoming one

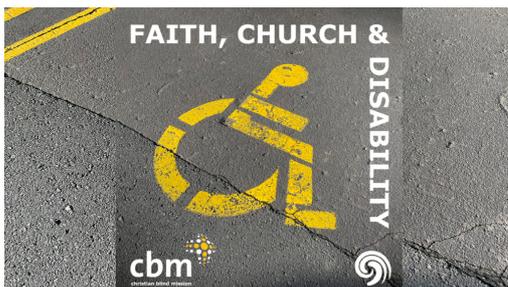
What could associating with the international congregations that rent our church buildings look like? Jacqui Caetano, Associate Pastor at Epsom Baptist Church, shares the transformation this association brings...

Many of our Baptist churches rent our buildings to a minority or a migrant church as a great way to boost the church economy and share space. But we don't associate with one another. I have wondered what associating with one another could look like?

I discovered that the Holy Spirit was already at work where I was planted as an associate pastor, so in the staff meeting, I suggested becoming one church as part of our Redemptive Family series. One membership role, one people directory, shared gatherings and eating together, shared giving and maintenance, associating and governing with one another at every turn. Although we will continue worship services in our mother tongue, we will be one church in every way. We pledge to work together.

With no objections, we set a Sunday aside for the Mandarin and English services to join hands and plant fruit trees in the front garden to mark our pledge. The English planted a mandarin tree, and the Mandarin congregation planted a feijoa tree to remind us of our association.

We as a church have gone from a declining elderly congregation and a growing traditional Mandarin service to multi-generational, intercultural, growing congregations worshipping in our mother tongue. Chinese people cross over to immerse themselves in the English language. Together we take collective responsibility to be a redemptive family in the place God has planted us.



The Faith, Church & Disability podcast explores the experience of disability and Christian faith. Hear from people living with disability, and reflect on our response as a believing community. 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.**



We have become a growing organism touching one another as we become more welcoming of one another and more culturally aware as we engage in conversation, often using a translation app.

Photos: Supplied by Jacqui Caetano

JULIE OSBORN

Pondering: Why few women are senior pastors in Baptist Churches



This occasional weekend column called 'Pondering:...' is where people from within the 'Team of 40,000 Baptists' can share issues they are thinking about, in a way that opens up a topic from a particular perspective. Feel free to comment on these pieces or contribute your own pondering. Opinion pieces are the views of individuals and need to be considered within the context of the diversity of our union of Baptist churches in New Zealand.

This pondering below comes from Julie Osborn, sole pastor at Connect Baptist Church in Manukau, graduate of our Pastoral Leadership training at Carey Baptist College.

The intention of sharing my opinion within this 'Pondering' column is to help us to look honestly at how we decide on leadership in our New Zealand Baptist churches.

As sole pastor, for over a decade now, of a Baptist Church in Manukau, Auckland, I have faced challenges. Some challenges are unique to

our specific location, some due to being single and/or female, whilst others will be familiar to all in pastoral leadership.

Since our church began in 1986, we have only ever been a maximum of 140 congregants. When I started in 2013, the church sat at around eighty. By 2017, it had grown to 107. Following three years of the COVID-19 pandemic and all its related challenges, we dropped to a home group size of thirty. I thought my years in ministry had ended and really blamed myself for this "failure." But through all of this, I felt God telling me to keep going through the storms and push through. Now we are starting to rebuild, numbers are growing again, and so is the faith of those who call this church home.

At the end of 2020, I had nearly burnt out, and I now realise how hard I had been trying to prove myself as a single woman in senior pastoral ministry. This was not a conscious thing, but when we only have a handful of female senior or sole Baptist pastoral leaders scattered throughout the nation, I believe there is a much bigger problem that needs addressing.

Monique Lee (Lead Pastor at Manurewa Baptist Church), Rachel Roche (Kaitiaki Regional Advisor, Northern Baptist Association), and I did some interviews two years ago with women leaders who have left our movement of churches. Charles Hewlett, our National Leader, requested this research. I am very appreciative of Charles, who humbly met these women in person to apologise on behalf of New Zealand Baptists, acknowledging that their offences were real. Several female Baptist Pastors have left our New Zealand Baptist churches because of poor processes of conflict resolution that in the past have often favoured our male senior pastors.

While we have improved in recent years in appointing women to pastoral leadership roles, there remains only a handful of women throughout our movement in senior or sole positions who do not co-lead with a male counterpart. I have always wondered what the "real" reason is. Then Rachel gave me an interesting article to read that resonated with me. "Uncovering and dismantling barriers for women pastors," written by Heather Matthews, published in Priscilla Papers (Winter

2022). In North American egalitarian evangelical churches, just like in our New Zealand Baptist Churches, there are few women senior or sole pastors. In both nations, most mainline denominations ordain female clergy. So why do so many female pastors continue to encounter what the article refers to as the “stain-glass ceiling”? (Reference the “glass ceiling” for women in management in secular occupations.) Why do they still lack opportunities for senior or sole pastoral roles?

Heather’s research revealed that although the percentage of women clergy in the United States of America rose from 6% in 1980 to 20% in 2016, women still lead few American congregations. Since 1998, the percentage of congregations led by women has not increased. Here in New Zealand, Charles Hewlett, in conjunction with Carey Baptist College staff, has done some important work in recent years to change this pattern. Despite this, there are still so few of us Baptist women in senior pastoral leadership roles. In the American study, in 2012, women served as senior or sole pastors in only 11% of congregations. Our Baptist movement percentages in New Zealand are comparably low, sitting in 2017 at 7.7% (there were 18 female senior/sole/co-pastors across 234 Baptist churches).

In Heather’s study, it appeared that most male clergy did not understand or address barriers for women in leadership and that evangelicalism was intertwined with complementarianism.

Evangelicalism is a global movement nearly three centuries old within Protestant Christianity in which most New Zealand Baptists would be situated. You could probably say our New Zealand Baptist Articles of Faith generally make us Evangelical.

Complementarianism is a theological view that men and women have different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, religious leadership, etc. Therefore, some leadership roles are gender-specific within a complementarian view. An alternative theological view to this is referred to as Egalitarianism, which affirms gender equality and equal responsibilities within the family and in religious leadership. While these two views can both be considered ‘biblical’, New Zealand Baptists have been affirming equality

in leadership between men and women for more than four decades.

Getting back to Heather’s study: **While supporting female leadership in policy, this did not follow through to practice.** Of all the pastoral leaders surveyed, only 21% were female.

So, here is my question. **When it comes to the crunch, how many of our male Baptist senior pastors would support a female leader taking their place in the future?** I think we would be surprised, including male leaders, if they really thought about this with brutal honesty. I wonder if some of our senior male Baptist pastors, while happily employing female pastors and staff on their team, would not be happy with a female senior pastor or a female chair of the Elders. What do you think? I personally believe we have such a long way to go in our New Zealand Baptist movement of churches before equity in senior leadership is achieved.

My risk in authoring this article is that I will be labelled a feminist, which has the connotation still of being “anti-male.” - That I am not. I love the male leaders in my Baptist pastor cluster and fully support them in ministry. However, there remains a great need for change within our movement of churches for our practice to match our affirmation, and Heather’s American study has shed further light on this for me. **In terms of preaching, 94% of churches surveyed only had female preachers a few times a year.** How tragic is that?

So, here are a few questions that demand honesty: Are our senior pastors, either male or female, as gatekeepers to the pulpit consciously or unconsciously making decisions with a gender bias rather than ability? **Is patriarchy still strong in our New Zealand Baptist congregations?**

Heather’s research found that **gender stereotypes arose out of theological beliefs and historical practices of the church.** So, how do we change this within our New Zealand Baptist churches? In my nearly 11 years as a sole pastor, I have appreciated the change at our annual National Hui to a more balanced view of male and female voices instead of mostly men. Keep it up, Assembly Council, until we can maintain true equity. In terms of equity, **eldership has a huge say and sway when it comes to calling and employing**

pastors. Who is on your church's eldership team? How is the gender balance? In Heather's study of American evangelical church eldership boards, only 22% of elders were female. I doubt many of our New Zealand eldership teams would reach even that! **So, how can we educate our eldership teams and elder selection processes?**

In my theology, Christ created males and females equal (Gen 1:27-28), and they will be equal at the Second Coming of Christ. Christ Himself sought to empower women through the Gospels amidst a patriarchal society. The Apostle Paul followed this example as he established many of the early churches. How stuck are we in gender stereotypes passed down through the generations based on societal norms rather than biblical ones?

In Heather's study, several women mentioned a **lack of mentoring in the workplace**, perhaps because of policies surrounding interactions between men and women. **How many women in our movement of churches are unable to "shadow" senior pastors in their work environment because it is deemed "inappropriate"?** In starting my role 10.5 years ago, I was told that I could only meet the chairman of the elders in a café and not in my office for fear of "congregant's view of inappropriate behaviour". Males seeking senior positions do not face this issue. So, how can we address this going forward?

In Heather's study, **few male pastors could see that their church leadership structures and policies hindered women from seeking leadership roles, preferring to externalise the problem to "tradition" or "culture."** Do your church leadership structures and policies favour a particular gender? If culture is the problem, are leaders actively working to change that? In Heather's study, sexuality was a barrier. 81% of men described set policies for interactions with women, such as only meeting in public spaces like cafés. The assumption is that men might face false accusations or temptation. **None of the men believed these rules impacted their work, whilst 79% of women said that they impacted theirs.** I suggest that our New Zealand Baptist statistics are likely to be similar.

Heather found that pornography use was equally prevalent among male pastors as in the general population. **Perhaps as a movement of churches, we could address the issue of**

pornography among pastoral leaders as an issue of greater impact. It would really help up-and-coming women leaders if they could "shadow" their senior pastors to gain experience.

So how can our Baptist male senior pastors support women leaders?

- > They can actively pursue a more even gender balance on teams, as pastors, elders, ministry leaders, and admin, where selection is based on fitness for the role rather than gender.
- > Learn to mentor female leaders well.
- > Have flexible working hours for working mums.
- > Teach gender equality and equity in sermons at least once a year.
- > Share the pulpit with female preachers.
- > Teach correct theology!

Heather's research found that many American evangelical churches took a "soft complementarianism stance," allowing women some leadership and freedom while maintaining men in senior power roles.

- > Develop and enforce clear policies and procedures that address barriers for women in leadership. Be accountable for the progress made or not made, the speed of change, and the stability of the new policies.
- > Men with power must act. We need male sponsors and mentors who are senior leaders. Our congregations will listen to you. The more that women senior leaders speak up, the more they will be labelled feminists and troublemakers, be marginalised, and their voices go unheard.
- > Change must be comprehensive and accelerated. This must be intentional through the Assembly Council, our Associations, our local churches (aka the whole Baptist Union), and at our various Hui.

I thank you for reading my thoughts, whether you are a male or female in our Baptist movement of faith communities. My prayer is that all take the discussion points included seriously. Have intentional conversations, make decisions, and take actions as they apply to your situation. Above all, we can support and pray for all our leaders, especially those who feel undervalued and marginalised.

I am happy to receive your feedback, as I wish the absolute best for our Baptist movement in the coming years.

My email is julie@connectbaptist.org.nz.

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.

Reference

Heather Matthews is the Doctor of Ministry Program Manager and Coordinator of Partnership and Academic Advising at Wheaton College Graduate School's School of Mission, Ministry, and Leadership. Her article was published in *Priscilla Papers* (Winter 2022).

<https://www.cbeinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PP361Web.pdf>

Photo: Supplied by Julie Osborn

GRANT HARRIS

Māori Language Week: Pepeha

Thank you to Windsor Park Baptist Church for creating this resource, which we are reproducing with permission. It was originally made as a booklet by WindsorCreative with visual identity adapted from reomaori.co.nz resources. To view introduction and other re reo Māori exercises, ask someone in your local church to print them for you from: baptist.nz/articles-news-stories.

This following exercise is from Rāapa | Wednesday:

Pepeha is the reality or the physical locations of genealogy and ancestors. For Pakeha or tauiwi (people who are not Māori), this is the whakaaro (thoughts) that we need to think about when we adapt Pepeha.

Ko ___ te/toku maunga | ___ is the/my mountain

Ko ___ te/toku awa/moana | ___ is the/my river/ocean

Ko ___ te/toku waka | is the/my canoe/vessel

Ko ___ te/toku iwi | is the/my tribe

Ko ___ te/toku hapo | is the/my subtribe

Ko ___ te/toku whare tupuna | is the/my ancestral meeting house

Ko noho ana au kei (insert region) | I currently reside in (insert region)

ALAN JAMIESON

From Ropeholders to Whiria Kids

Alan Jamieson, General Director at Arotahi (NZBMS), proposes the relaunch of Ropeholders, a programme weaving children into God's work in the world.



Since starting in the role of General Director, one initiative of NZBMS' history has come up again and again as I have travelled to churches and talked with Baptist Ministry Fellowship groups; Ropeholders.

Clearly this was a very valuable and highly influential children's programme that nurtured a committed heart for global mission in the lives of those who were involved. In fact, on Sunday, I spoke at an Auckland church and after the service had a woman share with me her deep commitment to global mission because of her experience of Ropeholders as a child. The legacy of Ropeholders has appeared to last a lifetime.

As many of you know we have been researching if and how an updated version of Ropeholders might be renewed. We hope and believe it could be, and we will describe the fruit of our research below. However, if a new version of the old Ropeholders is to be started, then it will need funding. To get the programme under way and cover the first two years of resources, teaching and input – we would need to raise \$50,000 (\$25k per year).

Therefore, this year we are going to ask our Baptist Ministry Fellowship groups and supporters to consider supporting a newly named relaunch of Ropeholders as their Baptist Ministry Fellowship appeal for 2023. For those shaped by the gift of yesterday's Ropeholders, I wonder if this is a gift that you can pass on to the hearts and minds of tomorrow's leaders?

Over my 32 years as a Baptist pastor and the last four years as General Director at Arotahi (NZBMS), I have been struck by how many missionaries and supporters of mission were called to global mission as a child through the Ropeholders programme. We know that God can call people to a life of service from a young age, but

our churches and children's ministries need to be resourced and encouraged to put that call in front of children in age-appropriate ways. I believe relaunching a children's global mission programme, like Ropeholders, could help awaken a new generation of followers with God's heart for the peoples of the world. It's exciting to think of what those followers might then do with that committed heart. Will you help us try?

Keep reading as we outline what our aims of the programme will be, and what a reimagined Ropeholders might look like. Giving details are at the conclusion of this letter.

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS:

What we found by talking to people previously involved in Ropeholders, as well as a plan to restart:

Firstly, thank you for all the feedback on what being a Ropeholder meant to so many of you! It was so inspiring to hear of the impact Ropeholders has had over the generations. The fruit of people is so apparent in those who were later sent, visited, educated, or sent others out to places they had prayed for and became familiar with through this programme that engaged our children to hold the ropes by prayer and work.

We deeply valued the following priorities found in the 1959 Ropeholder's Handbook:

- > Regular info and correspondence from abroad, "Information leads to Inspiration".
- > Personal contact with Missionaries home on Home Assignment.
- > Handworks (crafts) and donations, "showing sympathy in practical ways".

You told us that these things are important as we shape something new:

- > Regularity is essential. Our children need consistent mission content.
- > Passionate leaders are important for inspiration.
- > The pastor sets the tone for mission for the church.
- > Connecting with our missionaries relationally is vital, and really knowing their names, faces and the people & places they are in.
- > Resourcing families to talk about missionaries at home is important. Not just a church-based activity.
- > Prayer and knowing about answers to 'live' prayer needs.

> Personal visits from global workers are very special.

> Teaching simple songs in other languages was meaningful.

> You don't understand the heat, smells and conditions until you go, so anything that creatively makes things real for NZ children is helpful.

> Finding ways that children can contribute through works.

> Financial giving – sacrificing something for others.

We would like to give you a sneak preview of what we hope will inspire the next generation of children:

We realised that the old name wouldn't convey the same heart or meaning today, and a new name would be needed. However, we liked the sense of holding the rope with and for others and the active nature of the name. Therefore, we looked at a new name – Whiria kids. Whiria carries two meanings. As a verb it means to plait or twist. We liked the sense of the children's programme weaving them into God's bigger work but also the active sense of the children being weavers who weave the prayer and support of that work. This is a strong link to Ropeholders past. Secondly, Whiria as a noun can refer to a flock of birds. This can link with the migrating birds like the Godwits that travel across the world and then return home.

Whiria te Tāngata – meaning 'Weave the people together', picks up the heart of what we want this children's programme to do. To weave our global peoples, our missionaries and the children and families of NZ Baptist churches together. Our hope is that children can see how they can be part of God's work in the world. Woven into God's story, everyone is an important part of the family of Christ, no matter how young and little, we can each contribute; each prayer, expression of aroha, and small step is valuable.

Our AIM: To see our future generations woven into God's story in the world

Through (AIM) Aroha, Inoi, Mahi – Love, Prayer, Works – a direct reflection of the Ropeholders values.

Whiria Kids would be:

- > Driven by local churches through a local point person
- > Resourced by Arotahi – videos, projects,

information and a family webpage to back up prayer/learning at home.

> Fronted by 3 young adults involved in intentional local/global mission

Our whakapapa

Arotahi has a korowai – Māori cloak that is kept in the Auckland office. It speaks of our rich history of Mission and holds the Arotahi traditions, of love, prayer and works through long term commitment to people and place. Our korowai has beautiful tones of green and brown. These are colours our young presenters would wear on their T-shirts to be symbolic of this korowai as they help guide our children to love God's world and His people.

How Whiria Kids would work

We hope to launch the initiative at National Hui in November and begin resourcing churches in April 2024, immediately after Easter. Our upcoming Young Adults trips to India (October 2023) and Bangladesh (January 2024) would include filming for 2024 resources.

Each month we would release material and curriculum for a Whiria Kids session. We would focus on one country for two consecutive months. This gives us an opportunity to pray for specific 'live' needs one month and then give feedback the following month.

For 2024 Whiria kids may focus on:

April/May: Tripura

June/July: Aotearoa NZ – including Matariki

August/September: Bangladesh

October/November: Kolkata - including Joyride project for Joyya kids' fun day - In 2025 we would aim to have material to churches from Feb-Nov.

At this stage we would have three age groups with names of NZ migrating birds.

Years 1-3: Kuaka – Bar-tailed Godwit

Years 4-6: Toroa – Royal Albatross

Years 7-8: Pīpīwharau – Shining Cuckoo

Ka tangi te wharau, ko ngā kārere ā Mahuru.

If the shining cuckoo cries, it is the messenger of spring.

- Māori whakatauki

For a season these birds are in New Zealand. Then they migrate for the NZ winter and return to announce the new life of Spring.

We want the children to understand and experience how local and global mission are a natural rhythm – each needs and feeds the other. We go and return. Like breathing in and out.

Arotahi resources we will provide:

> Information on people and places where our Arotahi people are working.

> Songs x 2 for each area recorded with our 3 presenters and kids' bands from NZ Baptist churches – one with local language content (8 songs in 2024 – 2 songs x 4 areas).

> Prayer needs in month one, and prayer responses the second month.

> Different ways of praying.

> Video of location and Arotahi's work and workers – where security allows.

> Memory verses to learn.

> A project to be part of – 1 or 2 per year – \$50 for a month's hostel or student sponsorship in Bangladesh/Joyya kids' fun day etc.

> Craft ideas – that reinforce learning or a project to send.

> Recipes.

> Family learning resources.

Children will be able to earn a different medal per age group for:

> Attending a certain number of times per year.

> Knowing the motto & AIM meaning.

> Knowing the foundational Bible verse for each age group -Contributing to a global project.

We would encourage churches to acknowledge each year:

> Children who have earned their badge.

> Projects that have been supported.

> Other creative ways that churches have engaged in local and global mission.

If momentum grows, we would consider a regional tour in late 2025.

We also want to highlight that this resource would be FREE to Baptist Children's ministries/faith communities.

Draft budget

Whiria Kids Budget 2024-2025: \$50,000

If you would like to talk more about this initiative, then please email Michelle (michelle@arotahi.org.nz).

If you would like to contribute to this exciting project, then please make a gift through the

following bank account with these details. Thank you!

Bank Account Name: Arotahi Koha Fund

Bank Account Number: 02-0232-0150075-04

Statement Particulars: (Your name or BMF name *in 10 characters or less)

Statement Code: (Your BMF code or unique ID Code in our database)

Statement Reference: WKS

Email hello@arotahi.org.nz or call 09 526 8444 for any banking details questions.

Will you please pray and consider supporting the relaunch of a programme designed to instil a lifelong global mission heart in the Baptist children of NZ? If we can raise the \$50,000 needed to relaunch, then we can bring this programme to life and re-assess a longer term future after 2 years. If we are unable to raise the money needed, then we will need to put this proposal on hold and all money given to this 2023 Baptist Missionary Fellowship appeal will go to global mission resourcing and missional education of our NZ Baptist churches. But, I am praying and hoping that we can raise the \$50,000 needed and relaunch what has clearly been such a key part of our mission history as Aotearoa NZ Baptists.

Thank you very much for reading this far, for your prayer and contributions, and the way you have committed your lifelong missional heart to being such a significant part of this story.

Photo: Supplied by Arotahi

BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE

Standing in prayer for the Israel and the Palestinian Territories



This article is reproduced with permission from the Baptist Word Alliance.

Call to prayer

Baptists across Israel and the Palestinian Territories request fervent prayer for just peace. This includes the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel with 17 Baptist churches and the Council of Local Evangelical Churches in the Holy Land representing 13 Baptist churches in the Palestinian Territories, including a Baptist church in Gaza.

Together as a Baptist family that is one in Christ Jesus, let us mourn with all whose loved ones have been killed or are held captive. Let us follow paths of peacemaking that unequivocally reject terrorism or any acts that target civilians, include dehumanizing language, or limit human rights on the basis of ethnicity or faith. Let us generously provide help and support with the compassion of Christ. Let us stand together with our Baptist family and all who are suffering, and in the midst of complexity and violence, hear again the words of the prophet Micah “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly” in pursuit of restorative justice and peace for all people. Our Baptist leaders in the region have shared the following calls to prayer.

Prayer is the most important action we can take at this time.

Please join with Baptists around the world in prayer using the prayer points listed below.

- > Pray for a quick end to the conflict and the prevention of escalation into a larger war in the region.
- > Pray for the God of all comfort to be with those who are grieving the loss of their loved ones.
- > Pray for those who have been wounded during the conflict and for those providing medical assistance to them.
- > Pray for the safety and liberation of hostages, and pray for mediators to facilitate their release.
- > Pray for wisdom and discernment for the leaders, that they may make decisions that lead to lasting peace and alleviate suffering.
- > Pray that Christians from around the world will unite in prayer for peace, demonstrating the love of Christ to all peoples.
- > Pray for safety of local followers of Jesus and that they will be shielded from extremism and hatred, especially young people.
- > Pray for God to utilize our churches as effective witnesses during this challenging time, through the

power of the Holy Spirit, including the Baptist church in Gaza and its ongoing ministry.

> Pray that Christians around the world will give generously as our Baptist family across this area seeks to holistically minister in this critical time of suffering.

> Pray for peace, hope, and security for the entire region, and that the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays so that Israelis and Palestinians will experience life lived in peace and freedom with one another.

Photo: By Mohammed Obed. Sourced from RNZ.

JO HOOD

Curious: Make a difference



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.

Volunteers are hard to recruit. Yes and no! There are plenty of examples where volunteers flock to sign up. I'm curious – what's their secret? My hunch; a compelling purpose.

Let's talk where to recruit

Consider recruiting from within the group of people you serve. We know from research that people flourish when they commit to a cause greater than themselves. Looking out for each other brings enjoyment. Of those you serve, who could contribute by helping set up or serve?

Let's talk purpose. For partners of mainly Ministries, they're connecting with community whānau/families of young tamariki/children. There are more pressures on whānau to earn more, be more, do more, provide more. There are less mums staying home to raise tamariki and less supports for them in the community. There are more

pressures on whānau to earn more, be more, do more, provide more. There are less mums staying home to raise tamariki and less supports for them in the community. There are more grandparents involved in the parenting journey. Volunteers engaging in the group can be part of the necessary support systems for others. For volunteers with a passion to see people engage with faith, keep that purpose foundational.

Who are the people of peace? When you identify people who exhibit love, joy, and peace (those people you think, They'd make a great follower of Jesus), ask them to consider participating. Maybe God is at work in them. Maybe they need to connect with your team to see faith up close and personal, still journeying at their own pace.

If you're recruiting from within your community of faith, pray. When God highlights the name of a potential team member, meet with that person, share the purpose, find out about the skills and passion they bring, and the time they would like to offer.

Let's talk church leadership

Ask your church leadership to join in this recruiting journey. Your church leader probably connects with other church leaders in your area. Encourage them to talk about the need for people to join in caring for people in the community. We can work together, in unity, and participate together.

Your church leadership will also know of people new to the community of faith. Perhaps their strengths, abilities, and interests align with where you're serving.

Let's talk retirees

Locate retirees who have recently stepped out of work commitments. Sometimes the move from work-life to retiree-life can be less exciting than originally thought. If your church has volunteer recruitment processes that provide suitable screening, consider advertising on-line for retirees who might like to serve.

Let's talk success

As you take on new recruits, keep them connected with the purpose. Make sure you communicate the values and purpose well, provide times to socialise outside the sessions to create team cohesion, ensure

you have ways for ideas to be considered, and care for each other as you would for those who attend.

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/

Photo: Supplied by Jo Hood

BEULAH WOOD

Olwyn Dickson (nee Brown) Born 1940



Married to a pastor and helping pastorally, Olwyn knew she also had her own role. Her creativity shone in designing celebrations and in the women's organisations that were so active in the late 20th century. She excelled again in international women's work with the Baptist World Alliance.

Change has been a constant in Olwyn's life. She says God moves her on before she gets comfortable, so the text 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever' means much to her. With parents Royston and Anne Brown, NZBMS missionaries based in Bengal, Olwyn was born in India in 1940, followed by two brothers. In spite of limited finances, the family lived with interest and satisfaction in Madras, Bombay, Delhi and Agra during world War 11, following Major Brown's career in the Indian army, on loan from the mission.

Perhaps she has always been one for a quick answer. Olwyn tells how, aged five, she shot back to her mother, who had mentioned something she would do in heaven, 'Don't you mean if you get to heaven?' 'No Olwyn,' her mother said, looking straight at her. 'I know. With me, it's "when"'. What about you?' That day, Olwyn committed to faith in God. Certainly, Anne's modelling of life in the manse prepared Olwyn for her role years later, while Royston taught her to think out her faith with nothing sentimental.

Ill health sent the family back to New Zealand in 1952 to North Shore, Auckland. At Takapuna Grammar Olwyn faced playground teasing due to her voice, her long plaits and coming from India. She only tolerated school. When Royston became the pastor at Wellington Central Baptist, Olwyn found a much happier school environment. Then, when her father took a job in Invercargill, Olwyn followed and happily worked through 1958 in a jeweller's shop.

Reluctantly following a prompting she felt came from God, Olwyn trained in Dunedin as a teacher, gaining a BA and part of an MA, majoring in Education. Concurrently, Hanover Street Baptist gave her a significant coaching in the importance of hospitality, starting with her first Sunday when a member welcomed her and invited her home to lunch. A group of caring older people in the church took Olwyn into their hearts, loving her through the five years. She reflected later, 'Hospitality is one of the most important Christian gifts. In fact, I believe it is required.' Hospitality featured strongly all through Olwyn's life.

A second feature in Olwyn's makeup, concern for women's work, also started while she was in Dunedin. Anne Brown roped in her daughter in to arrange a Dunedin meeting for a visiting Baptist World Alliance speaker. Aged 20, Olwyn did it with flare, and has organised women's meetings ever since.

Life in the Manse

Newly graduated, Olwyn taught in Invercargill for two years, but travelling to Raumatī to a BYM conference had the unexpected extra of meeting a Baptist College student, Don Dickson from New Plymouth. He said it was love at first sight. Olwyn was gradually convinced by his leadership, accepted the fun poked at them and the courtship by distance.

They married early in 1966 and went to their first church, Petone Baptist, with a conscious decision that Olwyn, high school teacher that she was, would not take a teaching job. They both felt called to ministry, and went to a church that had 18 people to build it together, seeing Olwyn as part of their pastoral team, an essential ministry leader beside Don, delighted to serve in her own right, not required by her marriage to the pastor. They did

divide the tasks, but nobody could say Olwyn was not interested in theology as much as hospitality—not with the determination of her father and the proclivity her husband.

On their first Sunday, Don got talking to a young Samoan man and visited him the following Saturday. That was where manse hospitality began for Olwyn. Don told her late in the day (when shops were shut), ‘Jacob and his family are coming to lunch tomorrow.’ ‘Oh that's lovely. How many?’ ‘I'm not sure. It could be four or twenty-four.’ So began the Samoan work at Petone Baptist, moving soon to bi-lingual aspects in services.

The couple's son Jonathan came while they were in the Hutt and daughter Hannah after they moved to Manurewa in 1970, where they spent the next five years. Olwyn comments that most of their married life she and Don never sat together in church. While Don led the service, she sat in the pew with the children, watching at the same time to help wherever needed.

The next pastorate was Tokoroa for five years in the late 1970s. Since it was one of the few one-industry towns in New Zealand, church programmes had to fit with the shifts and rosters of Kinleith pulp and paper mill, even changing activity times in order to fit Shift A and Shift B. As a town without grandparents, families lacked normal supports and church community rose to significant importance. Olwyn helped run programmes for families and parents. The town also had a large number of university graduates who appreciated the stimulating discussions developed from programmes like Francis Schaeffer's film-based course *How Shall we then Live?* run by Don and Olwyn.

The couple then ministered for a decade at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle. Don thrived on theological discussions, but could never have done so many without Olwyn's Sunday lunch hospitality. With her distinctive hairstyle of a bun on top of her head, framed with a few flying strands, Olwyn became well-known, along with her stylish dress sense that was also attune with varying economic levels. Olwyn and Don wanted the culturally mixed congregation members and visitors to all feel at home and that was a challenge. Many were former migrants or recent arrivals,

some came in from the street and some were highly educated university students. Social, economic, language and cultural differences were wide.

Olwyn's response was a Wednesday night shared dinner, partly catered. She exclaims even now, ‘When I think of all the food I used to carry in!’ One night in 1981, the Springbok protests disrupted transport and blocked the motorway. Olwyn could not bring the food. (The next morning two Baptist College students were found hiding in the church from the law authorities.)

For Olwyn and Don a much-enjoyed extra occurred when a scholarship was given (the donor insisted this had to include Olwyn) for them to see downtown churches in USA and UK with a major focus on inner-city Christian work. This finished with the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) conference in Los Angeles and the associated Women's Conference, 1984-85. This re-ignited her interest in overseas Baptist matters.

Olwyn and Don moved to Thames as the pastoring couple in 1991 and Olwyn found she was in her element in working with an active social service team on tasks like weekday crafts, foodbank, parenting courses and starting early childhood education. Olwyn observes that some people have complained about the work of being a pastor's wife, but she found it ‘the most privileged life you can have. You have the opportunity to become part of people's highs and lows, and to share in experiences you'd never otherwise have. I'd tell anyone who is about to marry a pastor, "Enjoy it!"’

Retirement to Auckland came in 1999 and Olwyn and Don joined the Remuera Baptist church and the Auckland Central Baptist Chinese Church. Olwyn had a new lease on life with the Chinese church and served as Sunday School leader and a deacon for years.

Women's Sector

Along with pastoral teamwork, Olwyn developed a busy life in Baptist women's work. While few women worked outside the home, they could help in several ways in their church. Baptist Women's Missionary Union (BWMU) was active with missionary support, praying, raising money, packing parcels to send and knitting baby clothes and peggy squares to send too. Baptist Women's

League (BWL) worked on women's welfare in New Zealand, attended National Council of Women, watched for social needs and children's needs.

Olwyn with her continued missions concern was promptly made President of the local church branch of BWMU when she was in Petone. From there and still young, women elected her to the national committee of BWL while Vivienne Boyd was President. Around this time, BWL ran its first conference in Auckland for Baptist Women's Union of the South West Pacific, BWUSWP. Olwyn's mother was one of the leaders and called Olwyn in to cater. Her creativity sparkled in planning and decorations for celebratory gatherings. That began her later considerable work for BWL.

While she lived in Manurewa, Baptist women's work Baptist was hugely active with large quarterly rallies. Olwyn organised the Auckland group, of which she was President, into catering for BWL rallies. Four times a year this meant providing for 800 women, mostly young mothers. Each rally became for Olwyn a dress-up occasion with table decorations, colours to mark people from different places, and décor for each table with name-tags and chances to mingle. This especially enabled women from smaller churches to feel they were part of something bigger. During that same Manurewa spell, Olwyn was on the national committee for BWL. She helped run a big 'Dorcas project' in which women made children's clothes to fill needs around them or take to the Baptist City Mission.

There was a somewhat different angle later. She almost alone as a woman on the board of the Baptist College. She enjoyed that challenge under Chairman Bill Edgar, but felt it right to resign when asked to coordinate the student wives' course, another fulfilling and enjoyed project. One issue to discuss was what things one did as a pastor's wife as compared with any other tasks a woman did for her church. Olwyn did not think they were so different. She recognised she had some additional openings, but advised, 'Be yourself and serve God in whatever way you can—not just because you are the pastor's wife.'

Having continued her interest in BWMU, Olwyn was voted its national President in the 1990s

while living in Thames. She travelled much by bus, visiting branches, encouraging isolated women's groups, fund-raising for NZBMS and the medical fund for missionaries. In one strategy, she and others urged each member of BWMU to, on her birthday, give a gift to the BWMU. The position of President gave her an ex officio position on Mission Council, to which she was later directly elected, and from there again on Assembly Council, bringing the good fit of both her interest and her mission-related childhood in Bengal.

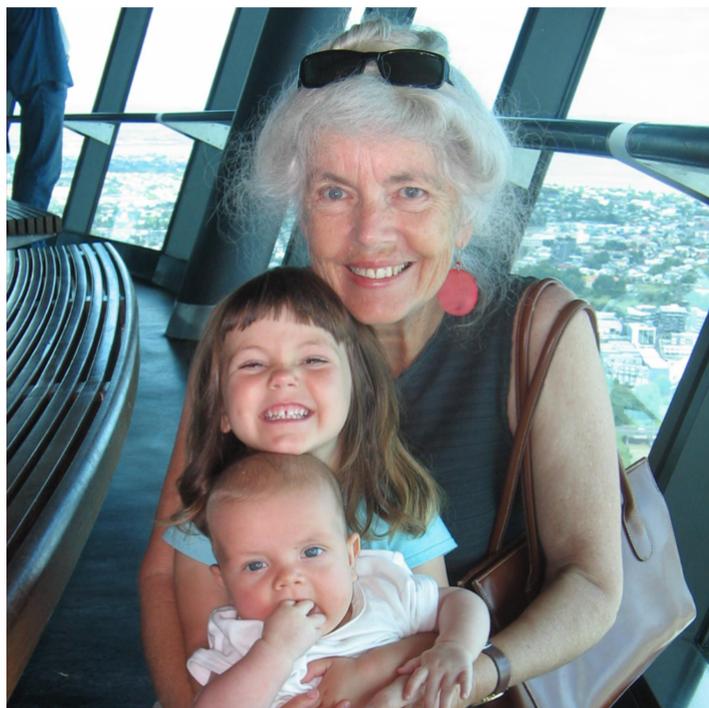
In the 1990s, the Baptist Women's Board developed out of BWL. Olwyn has served on the Auckland committee or national committee most of the time ever since, voted or co-opted. During these years, the strong connection with the Baptist women of the Pacific grew and Olwyn was a firebrand sparking the strong connection and activities of BWUSWP of which she was the President for a 5-year stint, 1999-2004 and made two visits to Papua New Guinea speaking at large women's conferences. At one in the Highlands, they planned for 800 and over 1000 came. There were no shops for extra provisions. After discussion and prayer, they cut meals from three per day to two. All happily accepted the change, but there was still a struggle for Olwyn. It strained her voice speaking to 1000 without a PA system, even though it was such a special thing to speak in English, interpreted into Pidgin English, with that interpreted into local languages.

By this time, Olwyn and Don were retired and free for extra duties. One year she wrote the programme for the international Baptist World Day of Prayer using the ichthus/fish theme with a Maori fish made of flax. In Seville, she handed people pieces of ribbon to make the fish. Participants re-used the idea at many BWA international Women's Department (WD) gatherings. While Olwyn was Vice-President of the WD, she went to annual BWA WD executive meetings associated with conferences and the ethics commission. At an 800-strong conference for the 2005 women's congress in Birmingham, Olwyn led with the theme, 'Seeing with new Eyes.' Her sense of occasion impressed so much that women invited her back 10 years later in 2015 to run a celebration in Johannesburg for 1000 participants. She had

them do a ‘Jericho March’ outside the hall even though American participants were reluctant, yet much to the delight of African women who had their drums ready. We shall have to curtail the further fascinating tales about peanut butter mills in Papua New Guinea and saving lives with birthing huts for women...

Retired in Auckland

In 2016 Don had a massive heart attack. He was brought through and lived another year with birthday and Golden Wedding celebrations. Perhaps it was symbolic of their partnership that after a church AGM at which Don spoke and Olwyn chaired, they were sipping a quiet cup of tea when his second and fatal heart attack occurred. They had conversed often of death, and that made easier all the myriad decisions needed. She had long known to apply, ‘When you go through the deep waters I will be with you’ (Isaiah 43:2). In this certainty, Olwyn has maintained a rich and worthwhile life. Indeed, she seems to be the busy unofficial chaplain of her retirement village.



Olwyn with grandchildren.

Sources:

Open Heart, Open Home, NZB, December 2001

Life following Don's Death, Olwyn Dickson, 'Still Life' newsletter, 9 June 2023

Interview June 2023

Photos: Supplied by Beulah Wood

ANDREW MEEK

Student accommodation: Chester House – Christchurch Central



Andrew Meek is Pastor (Discipleship) at Oxford Terrace Baptist Church in Central Christchurch. He is also Leadership Pathway Facilitator for the Upper South Baptist Association.

Baptist churches and student accommodation

This is the second 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. If you're a parent, grandparent, friend, youth leader, etc, please share this with your young people.

Chester House in Central Christchurch

In this article, we hear from Chester House in Central Christchurch, known for its care of first-time young people moving out of home and to Christchurch City.

Chester House began as a ministry of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church in 2011, offering a supported Christian living environment to students moving to Christchurch for their first year of flatting. When the February earthquakes hit just one week into that first year, it forced the students to return home until courses restarted and a new

house could be found (the original house was significantly damaged, requiring restoration). Despite the shaky start, the ministry continued with Chester House now having housed nearly fifty students and young workers since its inception.

Each year, a new group of young adults from all over New Zealand nervously leap into flat living. They are aided by the flat supervisor, with pastoral oversight from the church, to set flat rhythms, develop friendships, grow in their faith, and integrate into the church community. Over the year, Chester House flat members grow in confidence to stand on their own two feet.

Chester House was established to help young Christians moving to Christchurch make the difficult transition out of home by providing a supported Christian living environment that's knitted into the fabric of a local church community. The first year of study is filled with lots of massive life changes all at once, and it is all too common for Christian students to struggle in their faith during this time. In moving to a new town, students lose the important support structures they had back home, such as family, friends and their church family. Many will fail to settle into a new faith community, bouncing around from church to church while having their faith come under constant pressure on the secular university campus.

University Halls often don't help the situation, presenting students with unbridled freedoms while failing to support struggling students adequately. Students too easily fall through the cracks, and the latest death of a student who took her own life in her room at a Lincoln University Hall of Residence in July is another heart-breaking wake-up call to parents, universities and providers of student accommodation alike.

Baptist Churches can and must offer better alternatives to the conventional student experience that has been failing many of our young people. Chester House is one example in Christchurch, among others in university towns such as Wellington (Central House), Palmerston North (Baptist Student Hostel) and Auckland (Tab Hostel).

Brand new

This year, Chester House moved over the road into

a new, three-story apartment on the church site. As part of Oxford Terrace's recently completed housing project, the new warm, dry house certainly made enduring the cold Christchurch winter much easier. Flatmates have also enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other new residents of the housing community. It has been a joy to see this year's flat members build relationships with their neighbours by inviting them over for movie nights, joining in community meals, and roasting marshmallows with them around the fire in the common courtyard.



Applications open for 2024

We are currently looking for a new crop of flatmates to join Chester House in 2024, so if you know of a young person in your family or church who is moving to Christchurch for study or work, let them know about Chester House. Applicants must be Christians aged 17-20, moving to Christchurch for study or work from elsewhere in the country and beginning their first year of flatting. For more information, see the Chester House page on our church website:

otbc.org.nz/ministries/local/chester-house-2/



"For me, Chester house has been a very welcoming space during my first year out of home. It has been a great experience to be able to share with each other through cooking shared meals or in conversation."

- Daniel (2022 resident)

Photos: Supplied by Andrew Meek