

HopeProject nz

2019 project report



REACHING EVERY HOME IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND



shiningLIGHTS
TRUST
Helping the Church see afresh what it has!

JULY 2019

For this report I will summarise basic data, along with a few testimonials.

I will deliberately give minimal analysis of outcomes and strategy as the outcomes seem very much the same as Hope Project 2018. For a fuller analysis of what is being achieved and is possible I therefore refer you to the Hope Project 2018 Report, found down the right-hand column at AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject

A STORY: I ASKED GOD TO SPEAK — AND THE BOOKLET ARRIVED

A lady was asking God for a sign as she walked to her mailbox.

In the nine years she'd lived in that house she'd never had Christian literature in the mailbox — and this was an unusual request too. Yet on that one day there the Hope Project booklet was!

She said it was more than a coincidence, and chose to engage with the 10 Day Challenge afterwards. She then asked for a copy of the New Testament so she could learn more about the Christian faith.

Thank you to all who have supported. We will never know in this life the extent of encouragement this nationwide project has brought. This encouragement extends not only to those who do not yet profess faith in Christ, but also to God's Church. God's Word does not return void. We thank Him! We thank you!



Dave Mann
Director — Shining Lights Trust

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(1) Promotion to churches

The goal of any united national gospel project like this must be to enable connections between public media and private conversations. As a strategy, partnership with churches / interested believers is therefore vital to the success of the project's goals.

Our promotions to believing Christian communities include Shine TV ads, as well as ads on Rhema Media's three radio channels, Life FM, Radio Rhema and Southern Star. Rhema Media have been very generous towards and supportive of these national gospel projects.

We then both email and send snail mail to all churches we can find contact details for. This is a sizeable administrative effort. Currently this is 2200 churches. This puts these efforts on their radar, while offering churches free NZ-made outreach-related resources, and inviting them to subscribe for the monthly pastors' updates, so communication can exist. Due to care taken, many have been appreciative of this 'unsolicited' mail, and use various materials offered.

We send monthly digital pastors' updates to 680 partnering churches, and monthly digital prayer updates to 1800 subscribers.

Our 'Hope Project Regional Reps' then give two to three courtesy calls within the year to our partnering pastors, to encourage them to read one or two of these updates, to check they are aware of the project, and to encourage them to be intentional in their equipping of members for everyday spiritual conversations.

Regarding funding strategy: Funding is only mentioned in passing within these conversations — and never dwelt upon. Our goal is to raise awareness of needs, but our belief is that God is our ultimate provider, not churches or individuals. God will use whatever means of provision He decides.

We then also send a letter (digitally and by snail mail) to various conveners of city and town pastors' groups whom we know, with the hope that the national gospel projects will

be discussed and valued by local pastors as a group. The opportunities are significant for groups who have pastors within them with the capacity or will to engage wider. Obviously, the gospel goes to most homes in each of their communities as a result.

For our team, the above effort requires considerable media



development and time. Through this effort, a project is put on the radar of church leaders from a number of directions concurrently, to encourage (1) intentionality in equipping members for conversational outreach whilst (2) utilising the project as a gospel opportunity, and also (3) potentially supporting the project.



(2) Intentional Conversational Outreach Equipping

In summary, the statistics below will roughly match the previous Easter, for which we measured about 30,000 equipped within their churches for conversational outreach in connection with the project. Video-based equipping will have been less than in 2018 as we released no new resource. Pulpit-based equipping will logically have been more, because this is what we focused our promotions to churches on, including a new graphically designed free pulpit and small group resource.

From our survey: Based on our post-event survey of partnering churches, 33% of our 680 partnering churches intentionally equipped members. With an average partnering church size of approx 100 people, this equates to 22,660 people intentionally equipped. However, the sample group was very small leaving a reasonable margin of error.¹

From our web data — 6 months data:

From the beginning of Hope Project's promotions to churches in October 2018 until its completion just after Easter 2019 the AllTogether.co.nz website had 6,319 unique users producing 46,010 page views.

Of note with regard to outreach equipping, the 'outreach equipping sermons and studies' resource at this website had 1,454 visits, and the 'equipping videos' had 1,463 visits.

From our web data — 12 months data:

From one month after Hope Project 2018 (as a fresh starting point for statistics) the AllTogether.co.nz website had 9,333 unique users producing 76,799 page views.

With regard to outreach equipping, the 'outreach equipping sermons and studies' resource at this website had 1,789 visits, and the 'equipping videos' had 2,151 visits.

This website has a bounce rate of 6.36%, which is very low. This indicates that audiences are coming to this website with

intent to find information or resources that they have become aware of through some means.

On the basis of the above web statistics we would suspect that far more churches are using the outreach-equipping resources than are measured in our above-mentioned survey.

As an outreach-equipping and mobilisation website in New Zealand, these statistics are very encouraging.



STORY: YOUR OUTREACH EQUIPPING MATERIALS CHANGED THE WAY I THINK

A pastor emailed to say he'd read our book, 'Because We Care,' which talks about the need for intentionality in equipping members for conversational outreach. He said it had changed the way he saw and approached evangelism. One day per week was set aside for an evangelism focus at a 'Drop in Center', and they were now successfully engaging those visiting in meaningful conversation.

¹ Only 36 of 200+ attempted phone-interviews with pastors successfully connected with the pastor and engaged a conversation. The scale of the entire effort, combined with a late Easter (late April) and our national 'Vision Tour' to connect with pastors' groups starting late May, contributed to leave insufficient volunteer energy to complete a more detailed survey in keeping with previous projects.



STORY: AMAZING SERMON SERIES — THANK YOU!

A pastor who checked out the "Everyday Spiritual Conversations" sermon series we provided (with matching small group discussion guides) contacted us to say, "The resources you've provided are just superb!" Having had a good look, he saw hardly anything he felt he'd need to change for his own use, his was one of many churches to use this resource in the February to April period.

STORY: EQUIPPING RESOURCES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A church leader emailed to say, "I just wanted to thank you for the ongoing work that you are doing in equipping and inspiring the Christian church in NZ... We continue to be enthused and instructed by the 5-minute video-seminars... We are going through the series again at present as part of our Sunday service, and will do so again into the future"

Spiritual Conversations' (outline notes with matching studies). This included graphic design on the note, handouts, Powerpoint design and also promotional social media flyers. All were editable. The question was whether changing the visuals would change their level of use.

As a promotional strategy for these, we sold printed copies for \$40, while encouraging churches to download the free (and fully editable) versions from the website instead of purchasing. (Why buy them if they are free?)

The clear feeling of our team has been that their use and 'value' in the eyes of New Zealand churches, as a resource, increased as a result. This series generated more interaction from churches than any previous similar resource. God-willing we will find the approx. \$1000 needed per series, and time, to give our other 5 existing series the same graphic (and concurrent content) update. We will then seek ways to make these available internationally, as they are a unique resource, and strategically significant.

New resource:

As an experiment we graphically designed one of the free online outreach-equipping sermon series titled 'Everyday



STORY: PASTORS UNITE TO BRING CHANGE TO THEIR CHURCHES TOGETHER

In Tauranga a group of pastors made themselves accountable to one another to apply the habit-based equipping approach outlined at the All Together website². Most committed to use the 'Everyday Spiritual Conversations' series this year in their pulpits, with most doing the same in their small groups, and some applying the 'testimony' habit also, to bring consistency and sustainability to their leadership in this area.

2 AllTogether.co.nz/ATConsulting



(3) Hope Project — TV

For Hope Project Easter 2019, two TV ads were utilised. Both were repeats or 'remakes' of our 2018 ads. In this kind of marketing, consistency within branding and messages works powerfully. Fresh creativity and changing things regularly can actually work against a 'product'.

The first ad was a 15 second updated ad featuring Dave Mann, purposed to raise awareness of the booklets arriving in letterboxes. The second, which had both a 15 and 30 second version, featured Jade Hohaia, giving a spoken word (poem) about Easter. These were played on the two weeks leading into the Easter weekend, with a two-thirds weighting in funds toward the spoken word.

Channels included TVNZ 1, TVNZ 2, Duke, Three, Three Life, Bravo, Prime, Sky, Maori TV and Choice TV.

Overall, the flight achieved 246.6 TARPs (up from the projected 230 — so a good result). The flights reached 54% of all 18-54 year-olds (the target audience for placement) at an average frequency of 4.6 times — which was again slightly up from the projected frequency.

Programme highlights:

- 1 News at 6pm
- Married At First Sight
- Shortland Street
- Lost & Found
- Sunday
- Home and Away
- The Graham Norton Show

The total audience within the 18 to 54 year-old age bracket was 1,259,000 people. If we assume those aged 54 to 74 to be watching TV just as much, if not more (which is a safe assumption given the rise of various digital TV options), the total reach can safely be said to be over 1,800,000 (as our target audience is genuinely everyone. There is no 'age limit' to our 'product').

STORY: TV ADS A HIT AGAIN

Many people contacted us to express their delight and appreciation at the TV ads about Jesus found on public TV in the Easter period. Only one person out of an audience of over 1,800,000 contacted us to say they thought the existence of these ads was an offence. With creativity and wisdom, positive public engagement is more than possible!

STORY: I FEEL EMPOWERED!

A gentleman emailed to thank us for copies of the new booklet, which had been given to neighbours and friends. He was also encouraged by the TV advert with the Spoken Word about Jesus, which he'd seen multiple times.



(4) Hope Project — Booklets

Data: 1,530,000 copies of the 2019 booklet were printed. The booklets were delivered immediately to over 1,360,000 homes. Approximately 130,000 were sent to churches and others upon request, for their own use. This leaves us approximately 40,000 to give to those desiring them in the coming years. (Copies of all booklets are sent, in any volume, free of charge, as long as stocks remain).

Printed late: Unfortunately, the booklets were printed late. This is the first time this has happened, and was beyond our control. We lodged an appropriate complaint with those responsible, and informed churches (though many do not read emails, so remained unaware). This meant that local churches received booklets in the week prior to the national delivery, rather than two weeks prior. This certainly affected the momentum of this project for some churches. For example, the plan of some combined church groups to arrange the delivery of booklets to 'no circulars' homes prior to Easter was affected.

An assessment — local church use still not as we request: Our encouragement to churches is that all members be given 2 spare copies of the booklets for the car, handbag or just inside the door of the house. These are for giving to people when in conversation. Each booklet has half a dozen possible topical connection points, making their giving quite easy. Doing this provides pastors with a 'measurable', for their members' application. Doing this also challenges members in a tangible way to actually do something themselves to connect the gospel with others. This is strategically of high value! Where booklets are not given away by late in the year members could give their two with Christmas gifts... so it is all achievable. The repeated loss of this opportunity is disappointing. We will continue with our encouragements, as we believe the strategic dynamic being encouraged here is sound from a leadership point of view.



STORY: REGULAR WITNESS OVERJOYED

A gentleman who regularly makes himself available to engage people in spiritual conversations shared of a lady who, upon being offered a booklet, took it and held it against her heart saying, "I love these — thank you so much!" A Muslim lady likewise gave him sincere and heart-felt thanks, due to her interest to learn more about the prophet Jesus (noting that Isa/Jesus is a prophet within Islam, so learning about Jesus is permissible, and the four Gospels (Ingil) are amongst their holy writings).

STORY: FROM NEW AGE TO NEW LIFE

A believer gave a booklet to a young lady on the street who had been following New Age teachings. She read it right there and then. Seeing something of more worth than what she already knew she decided she wanted to entrust Christ with her life from that day onwards.



STORY: BOOKLETS INSPIRE INNOVATION ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

One church told of its effort to give booklets in an envelope, as a part of a gift given to 300 families. 'Such a good talking point' was the response of another man. Booklets were given to members of the public as part of another church's community event. Another told of how they are given with food parcels and in 'Care Bags,' while another who runs a B&B finds tourists to consistently be interested in them. In another community four churches worked together to deliver booklets to no-circulars homes. On so many fronts the Hope Project resources encourage and aid initiative.

STORY: CONVERSATIONS CATALYSED

More than a booklet that goes to homes, the 'Hope For All' booklets have become a catalyst for active outreaching efforts. One man emailed to tell of the Hindu man he talked with in the gas station to whom he passed a booklet, the conversation with the cashier in the same place, and then the Maori lady who asked his help pumping up her tyres just outside. A conversation followed, in which a story from the booklets that related to a family challenge she had encouraged her.

STORY: HOPE FOR ALL OFFERED AT LOCAL FARMERS MARKET

A retired farmer contacted us for booklets for the local Farmers Market. He set up a stall, to offer the booklets, while engaging conversations about the hope our society remembers at Easter.

STORY: EX-PRISONER GOING TO CHURCH

A prison chaplain called a pastor to explain that a Hope Project booklet was the reason that a new Christian would be coming to his church on his release shortly.

No-Circulars homes: 52% of our surveyed churches were aware of members within them who delivered booklets to no-circulars homes. This is on par with 56% in 2018 and 64% across the first three efforts in 2014 to 2016.

STORY: CHURCHES UNITE TO VISIT NO-CIRCULARS HOMES WITH BOOKLETS AND EASTER EGGS

A church family emailed to tell us of a united Church effort in their town. Members were visiting no-circulars homes with both booklets and Easter eggs, to bless the homes. So easy. What if every community did this?

STORY: TEAM MEMBER DELIVERS 2000 BOOKLETS

One of our team members again committed to take booklets to businesses. He would ask to see the manager, and offer a booklet about hope for Easter. Only two times in 800 was this offer turned down, and in each case, it was with a polite 'No thank you.' Often there would be more than one staff member present, so he'd give them one each saying something like, "No point in having you fight over it is there?" This effort, with a friend or two helping, delivered 2000 booklets in addition to those taken to 'no-circulars' homes. He found their visits to homes to be well received also, with 9 out of 10 accepting, and nearly all others being very polite.



Content selection for 2019 booklet: In the current series of booklet we are very intentionally seeking to impart a knowledge of the history behind our culture's most treasured values, as it is firmly rooted within specifically Christian effort. In 2019 the topics were...

(1) ...our concepts of charity and...

(2) ...our belief in the equality of men and women.

This content is identity informing for our nation, and highly significant in view of the continuing public conversation that exists about who we are as a nation. Those leading our nation are seeking to redefine who we are, without regard for our past. The Christian Church has much work to do in this area.

STORY: A TIMELY MESSAGE — 'THIS IS NOT WHO WE ARE!'

Our Prime Minister's brilliant words in response to the recent Christchurch massacre, 'This is not who we are,' raised a question: 'Who then are we — and why?' A lady wrote to thank us for the booklets, recognising the significance of the project's stories in bringing an answer to that question.



Regarding other resources and efforts supporting 'heritage' education with public audiences:

There is a great need for new works to join this effort. For our part we are discussing this matter with pastors' groups so they can each begin to tell these stories to children, in sermons and in public talks. We are providing small group studies related to our booklets in the hope that churches will use these, as this would help members to better understand, remember and be able to defend how specifically 'Christian' our nation is in its heritage and values. Our work is also connected with the production of an illustrated history series for public schools and libraries called The Chronicles of Paki, which will have two additional stories added to it this year. We are also promoting books on this topic area to pastors' groups nationally, so they can be better informed on the nature of our Christian heritage and also talk about it on the platforms available to them. Karl Faase's Jesus the Game Changer video documentary series stands out as the premier communication tool which we promote regularly, because it makes this information accessible to the majority, who will never read a long book. Dave produces, in partnership with Rhema Media, a radio series titled, 'A minute in history with the Hope Project', which currently serves to progressively educate the New Zealand Christian community on the strength of its Christian heritage. We also have additional creative resources planned, pending the time to create them and the financial resources required.



hopeproject.co.nz/a-minute-in-history/



New 'Unpacking Life' (testimonial) videos:

These new video-stories were created for the Easter 2019 effort to synch with its themes.

- (1) Aimee Mai — who is director of Christians Against Poverty, thus giving a story both of female leadership and charity. The story deliberately included two short stories of clients helped by their service.
- (2) David and Linda Cowie — whose innovations and successes in the charity sector through Marine Reach, Ruel Foundation and the newer Family Care Centre in Vanuatu are amazing. (We shortened this story in the booklet due to overall length)
- (3) Rosalie Schwarm — whose testimony sat as a powerful testament to the power of Christ in a person's life to bring change.



The 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's firsts visit:

Beyond the history told related to the above two theme areas, we wanted to connect with the 250th anniversary of Cook's first visit to New Zealand. Due to the way this history is being re-interpreted we felt it wise to frame this history with the story of Ngapuhi Chief Patuone, who saw Cook as a 5 year old in 1869 and remarkably lived through the period of Te Tiriti and its betrayal to see the end of the land wars in 1972 at which point he was 108 years old.

STORY: I'M A CHRISTIAN NOW — HELP ME FIND A CHURCH!

A lady who has struggled with faith and church contacted us for help. She'd had a diverse background in her earlier years including Ratana and Catholicism — and more. She had found these experiences 'rigid' — yet felt drawn to seek out a spiritual freedom she believed must exist. She had started watching Christian TV, including Joyce Meyer and Dr Charles Stanley. These fed her faith. Following the reading of a Hope for All booklet she felt ready to try church again. We were able to connect her with a church that was in her area, and where the bi-cultural values she held dear might be appreciated. Could it be that positive local New Zealand stories were needed to help her see the Church here in a fresh light, sparking a new readiness to engage with a local congregation?



Regarding booklet length: The goal has been 4,000 to 5,000 words, leaning toward 4,000. This booklet was 4,500 words, but is the first for which the primary author, Dave Mann, felt the length was too long. The fact that the 'equality of genders' content needed two sections (due to New Zealand being the first nation to give women the vote, in addition to outlining the global story toward a belief that women should be given equality with men) was a challenge. It was also the hardest to write yet, in the sense that getting good input on and critiques of the content from a range of qualified academics, descendants and others in a timely manner proved particularly difficult. While the content is deliberately simple in format, with each section being based on 150 to 450-word articles in deliberately simple English, we are aware that the combined length can look daunting to someone with literacy challenges. The length will be addressed in future booklets, as outlined in the concluding remarks of this report.

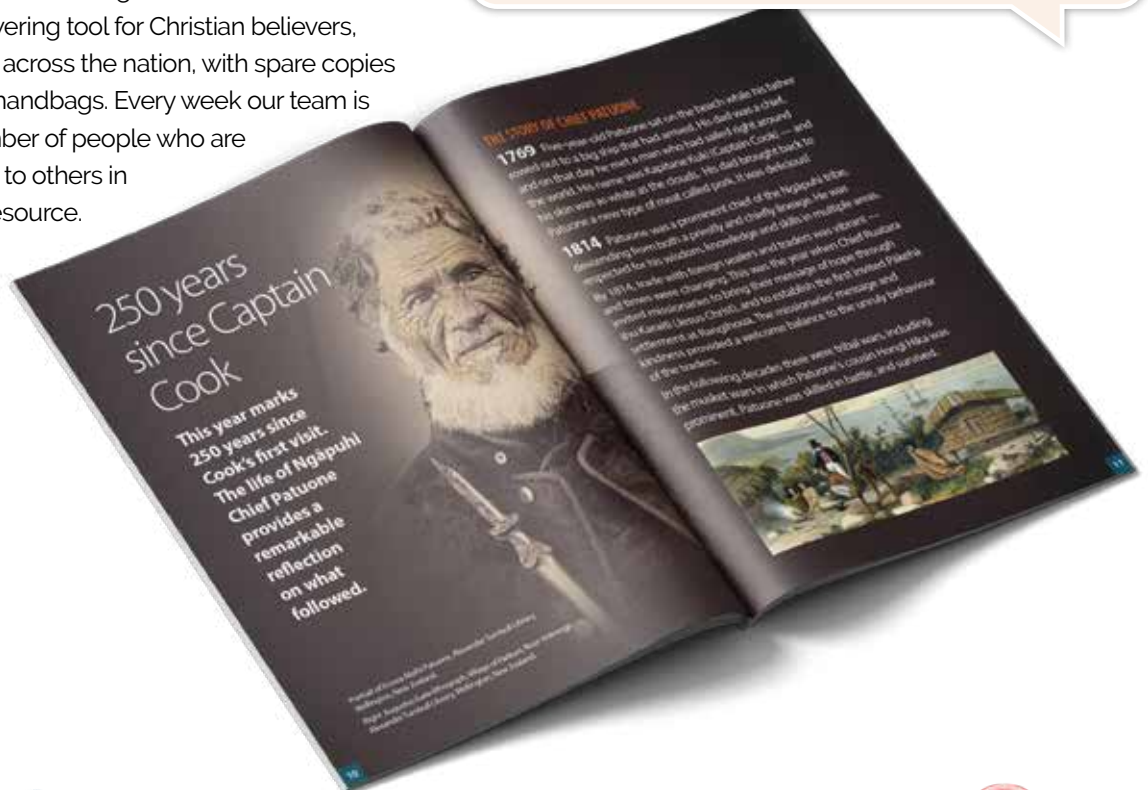
Feedback continues to be very, very good: Feedback from the booklets continues at a higher level than all other media combined. While we live in a digital age, the booklets are still cutting through to audiences. While many end up in the bin immediately, many others are read. This is the nature of all 'advertising'. It is a numbers game. The booklets are likewise a very empowering tool for Christian believers, found in continual use across the nation, with spare copies in churches, cars and handbags. Every week our team is connected with a number of people who are proactively witnessing to others in connection with this resource.

STORY: HOPE SHARED SO SOON AFTER OUR NATIONAL TRAGEDY

A man emailed to thank us for the Hope Project, which happened this year only a couple of weeks after the terrible massacre in Christchurch. He felt thankful to God that something was out there to speak 'prophetically and counter culturally,' to bring hope.

STORY: MANY WITH A 'CHRISTIAN HERITAGE' APPRECIATIVE

A lady emailed to thank us for the 'awesome booklet in my letterbox.' In these uncertain times and with so much questionable material about religion in the public square, receiving something home-grown and positive made her day — and especially with affirmations of a Christian basis for believing in the equality of men and women. To her, Christianity stood out in this, amongst religions. We note that, with about 42% Christian 'affiliation' at this time, there are many with a 'Christian' background who are quietly appreciative of these efforts. It's not just the church-goers.



(5) Hope Project — Web Media

Our public web media involves Hope Project social media, HopeProject.co.nz and also 10DayChallenge.co.nz (website, app and an experimental bot connected with a new FB).

Hope Project social media (at Easter 2019)

People reached: 487,283

Post Engagements: 581,994

As an example: The Easter Spoken Word (TV ad) was posted with the below words as accompanying text, achieving 19,841 '10 second or more' views.

Easter is when our culture decided to remember and celebrate God's plan for human salvation, fulfilled in the death and coming back to life of Jesus. As a celebration of hope... in love, the consequence for our wrongs were paid by Him, and our forgiveness bought. All that remains is for us to turn to God with humility and faith, and to believe in what has been done through Christ Jesus. With this, forgiveness, new life and eternal relationship with God are open to us. This is the Christian belief and it's considered great news, and is celebrated by more than 2 billion people globally each year.

Analysis of changes in the nature of our social media engagement:

This is worth comment, so this report will not be brief on this point.

Our team member Rob Grindlay commented how he felt this year's online Easter activity was the most successful yet. Audience numbers were driven incrementally through various postings. The nature of engagement was more on-strategy (stimulating support / debate / sharing) as compared to the 2018 program, and on a greater scale over all. Also, he said he believed our ANZAC experiment gained good traction. 'Plainly there is an existing undercurrent of public focus here which we can legitimately feed into... but this needs to be handled with great sensitivity.'

(The 2018 Hope Project social media statistics benefitted



from a 'viral' video, achieving about 509,000 engagements. Achieving 581,000 on the same budget in 2019 without a viral video is therefore noteworthy).

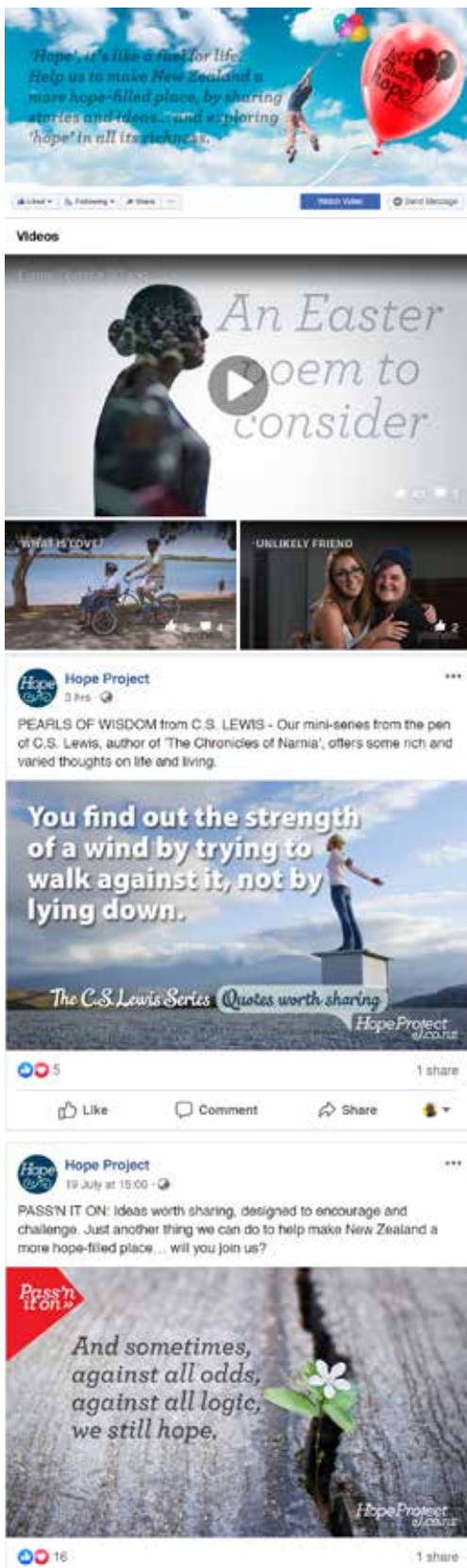
Alex Watts, who oversaw an amount of the interaction within posts, fed back that the team was encountering more constructive feedback and discussion on Facebook posts than in past years. This still included a continuing stream of semi-aggressive responses to anything with gospel content, while also attracting more sincere 'critical' comments like "glad your beliefs work for you." Others engaged with a more positive view.

It was noted that having believers who are not from our team engaging conversations on our behalf is far more easily received by non-believers than our own team's comments. This is because whatever our team says is 'what they expected us to say'.

Regarding the limitations of social media as a medium for meaningful communication, we are able to facilitate and spark conversations, but leading the conversations is difficult. Few are interested in going to a weblink to hear a clear answer to a question asked. Instead those engaging on a platform want to stay talking on that platform. As noted above, a number of Christians with good people skills are beginning to engage in conversations beneficially, but Dave Mann's assessment is that there are still too few engaging intelligently within social media, and that we are missing many conversational opportunities as a result.

Regarding our approach, Rob Grindlay has encouraged our





team to remember that our online audiences are often much larger than the numbers reflected in statistics, because many who are interested in our topics will never 'like' a post (so as to remain unaffiliated online to anything 'religious'). However, they are watching! This makes the manner of our interaction all the more important.

Two positive changes:

Firstly, there was a noted increase in meaningful engagement from the non-church public. This reflects the increasingly positive and trusted brand-profile Hope Project has with the non-church public.

Secondly, there was a noted improvement in the nature of engagement by Christian believers who are not members of our team, within the online conversations. Alex reflected how, five years ago, Christians engaging 'on our behalf' were more inclined to confront aggressive non-believers with 'the truth'. Today they tend to ask questions, and engage more wisely, thus endearing a conversation in the manner we have been modelling since the first effort in 2014. This change in approach by the believing community is now noticeable. Alex suspected that some who have been watching our manner of engagement may have been progressively learning from it, and are now duplicating it. Their involvement is very effective. Even though more involvement from the believing community is needed, this remains a positive trend.

STORY: JW READS BOOKLET, TAKES THE 10 DAY CHALLENGE, READS BIBLE, EMBRACES FAITH!

We were told of a Jehovah's Witness (which is commonly seen as a 'sect' of the Christian faith) who read one of the Hope Project booklets. This led her to learn more about 'mainstream' Christianity at the 10DayChallenge.co.nz website. She was then inspired to start reading her Bible for herself, and recently became a Christian believer as a result, and was baptised in a local church.

STORY: I WANT TO BELIEVE!

Amongst a number who went through the 10DayChallenge.co.nz resource, one emailed asking for encouragement, as they felt they had 'no faith — I want to believe and let the Lord into my heart.' God is at work in our nation — and the media enabled through these united Hope Project efforts is impacting lives!



(6) Hope Project – 10 Day Challenge web media

(website, app and bot)

The 10 Day Challenge is our 'gospel and discipleship' website (with app and bot). It is engaged with by New Zealanders who are seeking to understand the Christian faith as a part of their investigation. It is also used by Christian believers who are looking for a simple, concise and readily-available discipleship resource, to help them engage in meaningful conversation with new believers, or those expressing interest.

Regarding data, due to an error in the editing of this website in late 2018, data was not collected. We can therefore only refer you to last years' report (which can be found as per the note at the start of this report).

STORY: THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME FIND THE TRUTH

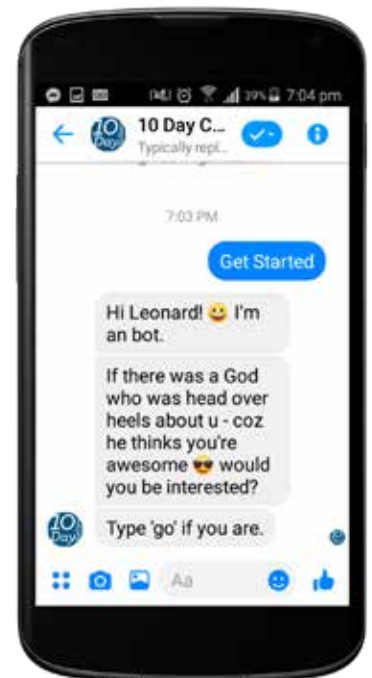
Amongst the many requests we received for hard copies of the New Testament, one lady wrote to tell us of her struggles with various sects or lifeless forms of Christianity. She felt 'doctrinal confusion', 'helpless and alone in my search for the truth', and 'tempted to give up'. Persisting in her prayers to God she visited a 'mainstream' Christian church. The 'Hope For All' booklets were available, and so she took one home afterwards. The various articles touched her — including the Christian battle against slavery (booklet 4), leading to a desire to immerse herself in the study of Scripture. 'Could I have a Bible please?' was her request. With her thinking somehow now clarified, and faith re-inspired, she said, 'It will be nice to carry a physical one when I go back to church on Sunday!'

A new experiment: Our 'Jesus bot'

The 'Jesus bot' is a robot that engages conversations automatically. It can be found via the 10 Day Challenge website or app, and is based in Facebook Messenger, in connection to a new FB page. The scope of conversation is limited. The primary content is an interactive explanation of the gospel. Those engaging are regularly given the option of 'engaging with a real human'. Some are more comfortable engaging with a 'bot' than a real human!

We invested no money in the bot during the Easter 2019 period. This means it had no specific advertising or boosting. This is an experiment for us, headed up by our team member, Leonard.

Of the 42 people who engaged with the bot (excluding many who started a conversation, but quickly left as they were not interested in the content/topic, representing a 'bounce rate' of about 60%), 9 indicated that they prayed the 'sinners prayer' for the first time at the conclusion. 11 'raised their hands' to talk to a real human.



We are now experimenting with how to best advertise, to attract audiences to engage with the bot. This is challenging due to the polarising nature of religious materials online, and the 'facelessness' of social media, which makes many people far more 'abrupt' than they would ever be in person. If ads are considered 'offensive' they can be 'flagged', which stands as a mark against us, undermining our ability to advertise. We look again to the God of all creativity.



(7) Partnership & funding

Partnership and giving

784 pastors, in approximately 680 partnering churches, receive our monthly pastors' updates. 1817 individuals have subscribed for our monthly prayer updates.

The positive attitude and sentiment of these pastors and churches toward this work continues to increase. Our Hope Project Regional Reps who give 'courtesy phone calls' to most of these pastors two to three times per year confirm this. Church leaders are consistently positive toward and appreciative of our work.

However, from the beginning of our promotional period to the Christian community in October 2018 until 20th May (on which date most invoices needed to be paid) only 74 churches and 386 individuals had made a financial contribution. This is very low.

To compare with 2018, 140 churches and 321 individuals made a financial contribution.

Funding

Hope Project Easter 2019 budget.	\$ 600,000
Actual expenditure.....	\$ 612,895
Income.....	\$ 458,800
Deficit.....	\$ 154,095

The Hope Project Easter 2019 period ended with a deficit of \$154,095. Most of this was paid by team members, who have lent to the project to enable all bills to be paid, with the understanding that it will be repaid if this becomes possible. Since then (as at 1st August 2019) about \$40,000 in donations has come in, reducing this shortfall.

STORY: THIS YEAR'S EFFORT IS AS INSPIRED AS THE OTHERS!

A vicar emailed to express her delight after reading the new booklet. "It is as inspired as all the others!" she said — and promptly asked for extra supplies for their church members to give out, and for their Op Shop.

STORY: WE ARE FULLY INVOLVED — WHY WOULDN'T WE BE?

One pastor very encouragingly shared how their church was equipping members through the pulpit, and also with videos; and giving spare booklets to members to prompt and challenge them to actually engage in conversation, and more. His comment was, "There is nothing else like this Hope Project initiative in New Zealand. Why wouldn't we use it?"

Why? In considering why, the key difference between the 2019 and 2018 efforts was that our team did not travel nationally in 2018 (in the months leading up to the 2019 effort). This was the first time in seven years that we had not done this nationally to meet with city and town pastors' groups. Could it be that, if we don't communicate the vision face-to-face, many cannot sustain a sufficient valuing of a united national gospel work (despite the local reach to most homes in their community) to still support it?

A challenge for our team: This is a real challenge for our team, due to the lack of general funds and staff we already work with. To note it, we are aware of no other ministry in our nation that travels like we do. Concurrently we manage these media efforts, travel to speak and pioneer some significant new resources and initiatives.

Regarding the travel, those travelling (Tony Collis and Dave Mann) are paid half-time for their efforts. Free accommodation options (with friends, or through use of motorhomes) are always used. Koha for our time and travel is very rarely given as it is perceived that because we have initiated this conversation with them it is our choice to be there, which is true.

The challenge articulated differently, as the Shining Lights Trust board perceive it:

It is perceived by pastors' groups that they do the Shining Light Trust/Hope Project team a favour when they host our team — not the other way around. (We would view it as simple teamwork).

To put the solution into marketing language, the work therefore needs to somehow shift from 'push marketing'



to 'pull marketing'. We need local churches to want the considerably unique creative and innovative input our teams can deliver. But how can that be achieved when so few have a clear vision for engagement with their cities, let alone the nation? Many want the Church to have a clearer public voice, but cannot perceive what achieving that might involve or require. Much of what we do is not understood enough to be valued enough to endear an invitation when so many other things are calling for the pastors' focus and time. So, if we do not initiate, the conversation in many places will not happen! This pioneering cultural work, against the tide, and in front of the wave, is our work, and this is its challenge.

After a couple of years deliberation on this specific challenge the SLT board have encouraged Dave Mann to attempt to 'profile' himself in a way that will attract invitations, to see whether a valuing of the strategy being brought to the table could be recognised sufficiently to enable a year of travel triggered by invitation rather than offer. This would change the way visits are valued also — endearing larger audiences. However, the challenge remains that the felt need is 'motivational talks' to prop struggling faith up, while the greater need (noting those who do not know Christ, and in view of inadequate public engagement, declining opportunities and threatened freedoms of speech and religion) is a boldly, yet wisely and strategically, mobilised Church. There are many who do the former (motivate), while we are called to the latter (which is about a more strategically considered motivation, equipping, empowering, resourcing and mobilisation). We have an organizational challenge here for viability!

In 2019, with thanks to Tony Collis, we are again connecting with city and town pastors' groups in 60 or more places. Tony is doing the bulk of the travel, and Dave Mann the lesser amount.

Summary: With an approximate 3,500 churches in our nation, and a carefully crafted promotional effort amongst those churches involving multiple media across a six-month period, less than 5% participated financially. The ongoing challenge is significant. The continuing lethargy toward what is being attempted for the gospel on the 'unity' platform is concerning. 'Each does what is right in his own eyes' (Judges 21:25).

Looking forward — toward a more functionally united Church

Due to the extent of our travel, our unique connections have given us a moderately unique exposure. This has led to increased intentionality in what we bring to conversations with city and town pastors' groups. However, this is an area of work requiring considerable sensitivity. For example, some would consider it an offense for anyone to 'presume' it even be 'an area of their work'. Relationships are paramount. The continuing work of God's Spirit in all of our hearts, to value the potential that exists within our unity (and to define what that means) is our need.

This year, as a contribution toward this continuing conversation, Dave released a book titled *In One Spirit*. This is being promoted and sold to pastors through these meetings. The Christian Church is no longer in a majority position within our nation. The question Dave seeks to answer is 'how could we become an effectively activated minority?' His argument is that the time has come in our nation for our unity within cities (and nationally) to go beyond the building of relationships, to an intelligent engagement within the public square. The freedoms of speech and religion are a case of 'use it or lose it'. Our views are currently only heard as reported through the lenses of secular media reporters. We therefore need to engage in conversations about the nature of united Church leadership at the city and national levels. As a quote from Dave's book says, "The local church (small 'c') is not the hope of the world. The Church (capital 'C') is, and there is a big difference between these two things".

There is an increasing readiness for this conversation around the nation. The pace of change is quite quick — even if lagging in terms of readiness for what the Hope Project exists for.



(8) 2020 plans

1. Hope Project Christmas 2019

The first Hope Project Christmas effort will take place at Christmas 2019.

The goal is singular: To return nativity scenes to Christmas in New Zealand, in view of their continuing intentional removal within the public square nationally.

The fundraising period was concurrent with Hope Project Easter in 2019. As a result, we proceed with strong strategies, but with a \$0 budget.

Although public media needs cancelling entirely, other parts of the proposal can continue uninhibited, as individuals and local churches can still be mobilised:

- Ideas are listed at AllTogether.co.nz/Christmas
- Various support resources are in development
- Because we have trusting relationships with many, we have options
- Rhema Media have been especially generous
- Various professionals are donating their time and skills in view of our financial limitations, from belief in the potential efficacy of the strategies.

2. Hope Project Easter 2020 — some changes

A decision date in view of financial shortfalls: The board will make a final decision on Hope Project 2020 in October 2019. The hope would be that some of the 2019 project shortfall would be recouped by then. If it were not, the decision could be made to take a year off doing this Easter project.

Two steps to reducing the budget — and their implications:

- (1) We are planning to shorten the booklets from 36 pages to 24 pages. They will cover only one area in which the Christian faith gifted us our values as a nation, instead of two areas.



- (2) We are planning to shift from a paid national delivery to a voluntary one for cities and towns. This means that, while rural areas will still be covered by the postal company, houses within 80+ cities and towns will only receive booklets if local churches work together to deliver them. We would send local churches the number of booklets needed beforehand.

So that it is noted, self-delivery in cities and towns was always our plan. When we first suggested this in 2012 the reaction from church leaders was so strongly negative that we only ever suggested it in two pastors' group meetings. We then 'retreated' to say we would pay for a national delivery via a postal company. This year we have been suggesting self-delivery to pastors' groups, and are not yet aware of any group that has reacted negatively!

Benefits:

- (1) This could save upward of \$80,000 off the \$600,000 budget
- (2) There would be more grassroots participation in the 'process' of the project, leading to greater encouragement — as those delivering booklets would have an increased personal sense of actually getting the gospel to a home
- (3) This increased participation would also endear a greater sense of ownership in the project, likely endearing increased financial participation.



The bigger goal — Hope Project Easter, Christmas and Family

As articulated in previous reports and updates, Hope Project's goal is to see three national media projects existing annually, representing the Christian community well within the public square. These are Hope Project Easter, Hope Project Christmas and Hope Project Family. The vision is detailed in our ongoing communications, or found in the Hope Project 2018 report. These are purposed to give the Christian Church and the gospel a visible national profile, and a positive one at that. The budget is \$1million per year.

STORY: WE NEVER GUESSED HOW FAR-REACHING THIS WOULD BECOME

A couple emailed to thank our team for this effort — amazed at how far reaching it had become, including its impact upon their own lives. They were encouraged by prayer updates they'd subscribed for, and were gaining conversational confidence through the Rhema Media 'A minute in history' radio spots which teach about our nation's distinctly Christian heritage. "To think this started with people choosing to obey God's leading is an inspiration. Thank you!"

- Creative national values-history resource development to empower the Christian community

- ...and more.

Looking to all God can yet do

Dave Mann

Director — Shining Lights Trust

On behalf of the wider Shining Lights Trust and Hope Project teams

For more information

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| — Hope Project Christmas | AllTogether.co.nz/Christmas |
| — More on Hope Project Strategy | See the Hope Project 2018 report in the right-hand column at AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject |
| — Hope Project Easter 2019 plans | AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject |
| — Equipping resources | Look in the dropdown menu when you hover over 'resource' at AllTogether.co.nz |
| — To introduce some of our team | ShiningLights.co.nz/our-team |
| — For awareness of other sub-teams | See the Hope Project 2018 report |
| — To donate | AllTogether.co.nz/donate |

Please pray for and support the Hope Project initiative!

Please also pray for and generously support our wider strategic work in this nation, which includes:

- Innovation in digital outreach
- The Godtalk.nz national youth outreach-equipping initiative
- Intentional unity work amongst city/town pastors' groups across the nation
- Outreach-equipping resource development in video and pulpit/small group resource formats
- Creative bicultural history resource development





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