

2023

# OUTREACH

## TODAY

*Things we can do together that we cannot do apart*

“...let your light  
shine before  
others, that they  
may see your  
good deeds and  
glorify your Father  
in heaven.”

*Matthew 5:16*

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A provocative thought

# Whose Kingdom are you building?

From a FaceBook post by Ps Keith Harrington, Invercargill

"The measure of what you consider success in ministry is a crucial question every pastor needs to answer. Typically, we have measured success in terms of the size of our congregation. This leads to potentially really bad practices in terms of what we do.

If we were to put a city and unity lens onto the question of success, it might seriously alter what we do. If success is the health of the Church in the city, then I am no longer focused on just how many are coming to the church I lead. If success is to see the Church of the city grow, then we will not be happy when the growth in my church is at the expense of the church down the road.

For too long we have not had a Biblical view of what success in ministry looks like. I believe we should ask ourselves this question: Is the Church in the city more healthy than when I began my ministry in this place? If the answer is yes, I believe God is pleased with what we have done. Might many be building their own kingdom, not God's kingdom?"

What do you think? Do our churches need to collaborate better in our cities and towns, and if so, how, and to what end?

## RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

### Pastors groups

Currently exist in over 70 NZ cities and towns

### City by City

[citybycity.co.nz](http://citybycity.co.nz),  
[city by city](#) FaceBook page.

### New Zealand Christian Network

[nzchristiannetwork.org.nz](http://nzchristiannetwork.org.nz),  
[prayasone.nz](http://prayasone.nz)

### New Zealand and Beyond

Annual conferences —  
[nzandbeyond.com](http://nzandbeyond.com)

### Shining Lights Trust

[AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups](http://AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups),  
[AllTogether.co.nz/unitytour](http://AllTogether.co.nz/unitytour),  
[Mahi Ngatahi](#) (working together) FaceBook page,  
Book: "In One Spirit" free via the 'pastors groups' webpage above.



The Shining Lights Trust exists to identify gaps in the outreaching efforts of the NZ Church as a whole, to help innovation come into some of those spaces.  
[Shininglights.co.nz/our-team](http://Shininglights.co.nz/our-team), [AllTogether.co.nz](http://AllTogether.co.nz), [Godtalk.nz](http://Godtalk.nz), [10DayChallenge.co.nz](http://10DayChallenge.co.nz),  
[HopeProject.co.nz](http://HopeProject.co.nz), [EngageConference.nz](http://EngageConference.nz), [HeLPPProject.co.nz](http://HeLPPProject.co.nz), [WhyChristiansBelieve.nz](http://WhyChristiansBelieve.nz)

# Conversational skills for outreach

points in connection with testimonies in announcement times once per month, with **modelling** achieved through our example, stories and gospel preaching.

If 16% of our nation attends church 'regularly' (meaning at least once per month), that's 800,000 New Zealanders in our wider Christian community who could be helped to engage.

If we wanted this community to grow in their conversational skills — to engage more like Jesus — we could!



The resources below are free, and could help.

## RESOURCES

- **Leadership habits — FREE**  
AllTogether.co.nz/ATConsulting
- **Sermon series — FREE**
  - Four weeks long.
  - Sermon notes with matching small group studies
  - Six different series
  - AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies
- **5min equipping videos — FREE**
  - 16 videos
  - All with matching discussion guides
  - AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members
- **Bulletin articles — FREE**
  - To print with church bulletin
  - AllTogether.co.nz/printmaterial
- **Youth resource — FREE**
  - A full package
  - One topic (outreach)
  - All NZ made
  - Both leadership & youth equipping
  - All 5min videos
  - All come with discussion guides
  - Godtalk.nz

## How do we equip 'our 800,000'?

A key role each local church has to play in outreach is the 'equipping of the saints for the work of ministry' (Ephesians 4:11-12). How could this be better achieved for our witness and outreach?

### A role-model

Jesus was an expert conversationalist. The way he engaged with a wide variety of people, taking each a step forward in faith, was a work of genius!

- He asked questions as a matter of habit.
- He spent a lot of time telling stories — each of which carried a message, while never explaining them to the crowds.
- He also knew how to avoid a question that was a trap.

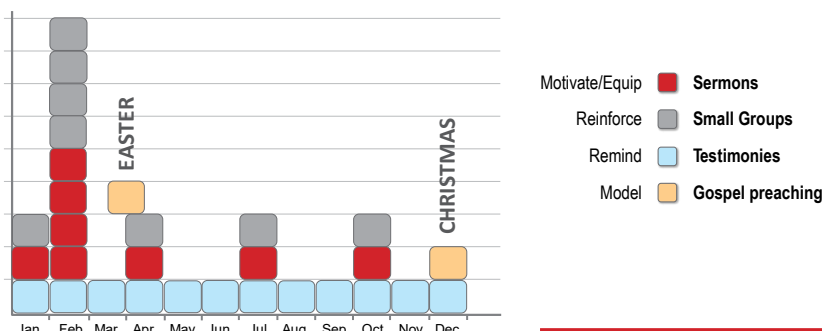
There is much to learn from Jesus!

However, to teach these lessons through a pulpit once will fail to impart them, because we all forget most of what we hear just once!

### Leading through change

A key to discipleship is therefore our intentionality to catalyse longer-term change through habits we embrace. These help us to purposefully repeat key points, so actual learning takes place.

If we want our members to grow in their abilities as 'conversational witnesses' we could as a **habit annually equip or motivate** through the pulpit, while **reinforcing** each of those messages through our small groups, while also **repeating** the key application







# Positioning ourselves to thrive in uncertain times

## SIX PULPIT THEMES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Our world is changing. Sometimes we don't like the changes. No matter our opinions on the changes, it remains that we would be wise to position ourselves to shine brightly as witnesses for Christ in all circumstances.

Here are six pulpit themes, to help us thrive rather than merely survive, in a changing world.

### #1. Love God, not money

We live in a wealthy nation. Many find security in their possessions. What would our emotional state be if we lost our homes and possessions?

The same can be asked regarding positions of power or status. What if you were to lose your job, or role, or position? Who would you be then? What is our identity really in?

Our identity and security should be in who we are because of Jesus. There are a myriad of Scriptural principles our pulpits could cover on this topic to help us live free from the love of money — so we are more emotionally free in changing times.<sup>1</sup>

### #2. Pursue a life of simplicity

Greed, ambition and materialism complicate our lives — and we're all at least a little bit materialistic! The pursuit of many pleasures can complicate our lives too. If these things have a hold on our hearts, when challenging times come we might be easily overwhelmed.

Simplicity is a Biblical value we don't talk about much in our current culture. Do we need all those devices — or to watch TV so much? Could we give less time to our pleasures? Do we need to buy so many things — or spend as much each week as a household? Could we reduce our food bills, power bills and water bills? Do we have to travel so much? Could we declutter our houses, bedrooms, offices and garages? If rising costs are a problem,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 6:10, Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 6:19-22, 24f, Mark 4:19, Mark 8:36, Ecclesiastes 5:10, 2 Timothy 3:2, Luke 12:15, 1 John 2:15, Luke 16:31, Philippians 4:19.

have we planted fruit trees, and do we know how to grow a vegetable (1 Timothy 6:6)?

***A simpler life is a more sustainable life — and likely a more content one too***

### #3. Pursue emotional health and freedom

When challenging times come — whether from a changing world or a family crisis, the state of our emotional health makes a difference. If we're healthy, we'll have capacity to stand, smile and give during our trials. However, if our lives are emotionally cluttered, challenging times might take us under and leave us with little or no capacity for others.

We are called to thrive in challenging times — like lights in the darkness. We cannot love others well when we are falling apart ourselves! How could we disciple our members toward greater emotional health and freedom?

### #4. Learn how to catalyse and contribute to a relational caring community

True community is a combination of relationships, and a group of people we're committed to. We are not in community by nature of being committed to a local church. We are in community when we are committed to the relationships, to give and help. In times of trial, community becomes important — because we can meet each other's needs. The Bible has plenty to say about Christian community, love and care.

### #5. Listen to the whispers of the Spirit

When challenging times come, we sometimes need to be able to make quick decisions. If we are practiced in listening for the whispers of God's Spirit, and the 'soundscape' of our hearts clear — God's Spirit could help! However, if the 'soundscape' of our hearts is being filled with the noise of our worries and troubles, we might not be able to discern God's whispers when it matters the most. Certainly, Christian community can help us in those times. However, God loves his people, and can lead us through our troubles or challenges. How could we better position ourselves as a people who listen to his voice?

### #6. Work while it is light

***Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."***


— John 9:4

We have opportunities to do good right now. We could choose to view all gospel work with greater seriousness in our churches, cities/towns and nation right now. There are ways we could share the hope we have with people right now. How could we disciple ourselves to be a people who are alive and engaged — now?

### In summary

If you were to make a list of pulpit themes for a changing world, what would they be?

Paul and Silas sang songs of praise when in prison (Acts 16:25-34). Let's position ourselves to likewise shine when it matters!



“But they who  
wait for the Lord  
shall renew their  
strength; they  
shall mount  
up with wings  
like eagles; they  
shall run and not  
be weary; they  
shall walk and  
not faint.”

**Isaiah 40:31**





# TO BRING INFLUENCE THROUGH STORY

*What if we were  
actually excited?*

*But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak  
anymore in his name," his word is in my heart  
like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary  
of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.  
— Jeremiah 20:9*

For Jeremiah, the word of God was like fire in his bones. He couldn't stay silent. When we discover something genuinely good it can be the same. It's only natural to want to talk about it.

Sometimes we who are in God's Church aren't very good at telling our own story. Here are some highlights, to inspire us to speak.

## CHRISTIANITY CHANGES LIVES

While it is not often published, Christian faith-based drug rehabilitation programmes are consistently amongst the most effective of all programmes. Countless testimonials exist to evidence the point. Somehow a miracle takes place in a person's heart as they turn to God with faith — and they are profoundly changed.

Statistics bear this out. As an example, to summarise from a commentary on 'Overcoming Addiction' by Chuck Colson a few years ago, "National recidivism rates of secular drug rehabilitation programmes range from 60 to 75 percent." This means, 60% to 75% go back to drugs after their treatment.

*However, the "...Hazelden Foundation... ..has a recidivism [fallback] rate of 50 to 55 percent. By contrast, San Antonio's Victory Fellowship—a Christian programme [sic]—has a recidivism rate of just 20 percent. Prison Fellowship's Transition of Prisoners Programme (TOP), which includes a focus on substance abuse, has a recidivism rate of just 9 percent."*<sup>2</sup>

Why the difference? One researcher, unable to find an explanation for the remarkable success of some faith-based programmes, simply labelled it, 'the Jesus Factor'.<sup>3</sup>

The same pattern is found in many other areas. For example, in programmes purposed to turn past offenders away from future

2 From a Breakpoint Commentary 'Overcoming Addiction', [www.breakpoint.org](http://www.breakpoint.org)

3 Three studies are in view dated to the 1980s, contrasted with 1994 and contrasted with 2009 - summarised in 2010. The latter revealing a continuing 74% success rate at 6 months after participation. See a summary at <http://teenchallengehawaii.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Success-Rate-of-Teen-Challenge.pdf>

crime. Colson cited one study that revealed that mere regular attendance at a 'Prison Fellowship Bible study' cut reoffending by two-thirds<sup>4</sup> The 'Jesus factor' makes a difference!

On the emotional level, the data is there too. For example, a 2021 study<sup>5</sup> revealed mental-health benefits for regular church attenders including an 84% reduced risk of suicide, a 29% reduced risk of depression and a 50% reduced risk of divorce.

## CHRISTIANITY HAS PRODUCED SOME AMAZING HEROES IN HISTORY

Global history has been turned toward good in a profound and unique way by the Christian faith. Even in our own nation's brief history we could consider the lives and faith of Te Whiti and Tohu at Parihaka, Wiremu Kingi Te Rangitāke at Waitara, missionaries Henry and Marianne Williams, or Octavious Hadfield, the grace of Wiremu Tāmihana Tarapīpipi Waharoa, or Henere Taratoa's rules for war at the battle of Pukahinahina (Gate Pa) — where he and Hēni Te Kirikaramu also, gave water to dying enemy troops, or Kate Sheppard and the WCTU's efforts in outreach, charity and for women's rights. Samuel Marsden's kindness and generosity was one of the reasons chiefs like Te Pahi and Ruatara grew to respect and then invite him to New Zealand — which is how the gospel first arrived here.

## CHRISTIANITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO COMMUNITIES

If the efforts of churches to serve their communities were considered together, the Christian Church would be the largest non-Governmental contributor to the charity sector. To illustrate the dynamic, a Victoria University of Wellington study found that the 5% who classified themselves as 'very religious' (the majority being Christians) donated 5.7 times as much to charity,

<sup>4</sup> Charles Colson, p311, citing B.R. Johnson, D.B.Larson, and T.C.Pitts, "Religious Programs, Institutional Adjustment, and Recidivism among Former Inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs," Justice Quarterly 14, no. 1 (March 1997), p145-166.

<sup>5</sup> Empty Pews Are an American Public Health Crisis, (2021) at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/november/church-empty-pews-are-american-public-health-crisis.html>

and volunteered 2.3 times as much. Our entire cultural values of charity come from the influence of this faith — due to Jesus' teachings.

## TO STRENGTHEN OUR WITNESS

Let's be intentional not only to learn and tell our own stories as people of faith — whether stories from history, our churches or our lives; beyond this let's also allow ourselves to 'feel' and to be genuinely excited about these stories. Jesus really does make a difference in our lives and we won't actually end up sharing these stories on our platforms if we aren't emotionally alive within them. 'Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks' (Matthew 12:34).

The excitement within us needs to be genuine. To achieve that we will need to feed our comprehension of the truly amazing story we carry.

## RESOURCES

- **Easy resource — 1min radio pieces:** Find 100 NZ history stories at [HopeProject.co.nz/a-minute-in-history](https://hopeproject.co.nz/a-minute-in-history)
- **Easy resource — 50 concise history stories related to our culture and values:** See Hope Project booklets at [HopeProject.co.nz/ebooks](https://hopeproject.co.nz/ebooks) (Free copies from [admin@shininglights.co.nz](mailto:admin@shininglights.co.nz))
- **Easy resource — DVDs:** *Jesus the Gamechanger (series)*, Karl Faase. Te Rongopai, Stuart Lange (NZ Christian Network);
- **Easy resource — Children's stories:** *Chronicles of Paki* (illustrated history stories), Alison Condon and Gina Taggart ([BigBook.nz](https://bigbook.nz)).
- **More solid reading:** *Who Is This Man?* John Ortberg; *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* D James Kennedy; *The Rise of Christianity*, Rodney Stark; *How Christianity Changed the World*, Alvin Schmidt; *Bible and Treaty*, Keith Newman; *Te Rongopai 1814 'Takoto Te Pahi'*, many contributors; *The Years Before Waitangi*, Patricia Bawden.







## What if we took our story 'to market'?

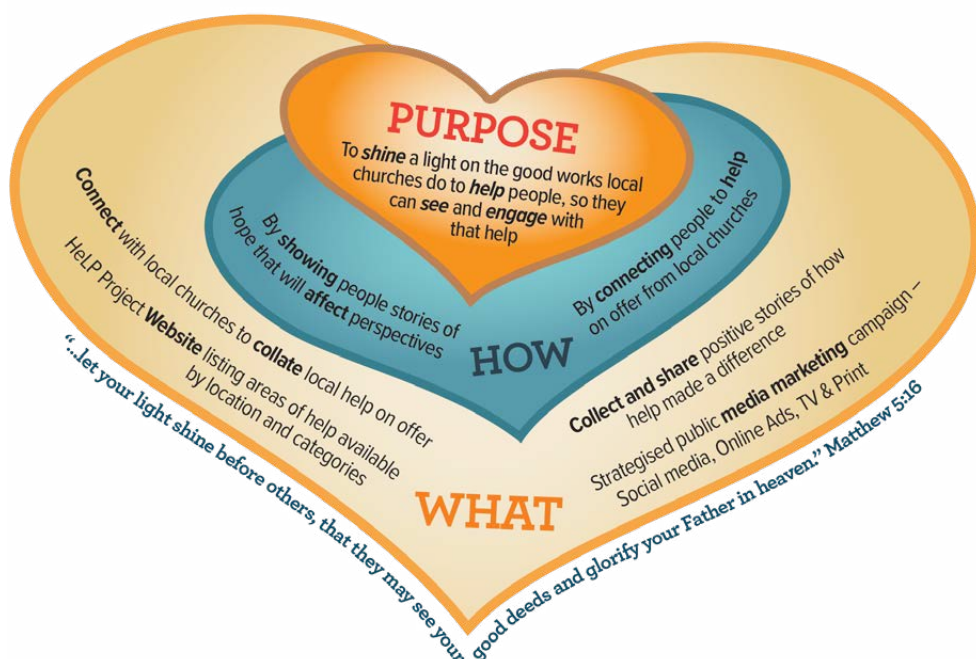
Would you like to see the Christian Church receiving a more positive profile for the good work it does? HeLP Project is a new and bold initiative that, God-willing, will help!

HeLP Project is a united communications initiative, purposed to promote things churches are doing to help within communities.

- It will connect people to 'help on offer' from churches and various associated trusts

- It will help our story be heard

Imagine an online platform where every church's community work is displayed, with stories of breakthroughs shared through public media (TV, web, social, Google AdWords), providing a place where those in need can seek out potential applicable help. That's what HeLP Project is.



...but there is more

### Unity, collaboration and cohesion

Beyond promoting and telling stories, through HeLP Project churches will become aware of the scope of what the various churches are doing across their own city or town. This will catalyse conversations, collaboration and greater cohesion. Areas of strength and weakness will be identified. Ideas that are working in one place could be duplicated to meet needs in another.

### City reports and possible national report

From the collected data, each pastors' group will be offered a report summarising the collective local Church's contribution

to the welfare of their community. As seen overseas, considerable mana and opportunity can arise as Government and welfare agencies realise the scope of Christian churches' work and engagement. This can lead to increased consideration, invitation and collaboration with them, as attitudes toward the Church are re-shaped.

### Next steps?

This sizeable initiative can be kept simple. Here are the needed steps in each city and town.

1. **Data collection:** The key task to catalyse this is for every church to fill out a carefully constructed survey. This (a) collects promotional information about their 'help on offer' to the community while (b) also asking additional questions, to enable a

### The help and the hope go together!

HeLP Project is the third of the planned 'Hope Project' media efforts.

- (1) Hope Project Christmas — keeping the Christ in Christmas through creativity
- (2) Hope Project Easter — sharing a message of hope
- (3) HeLP Project — giving profile to 'help on offer' from our church communities while telling the story.



meaningful report to be compiled, for the encouragement and benefit of all.

Effort is being given to keeping this process simple — with multiple benefits coming to churches and churches together.

Pastors' groups will be asked to host a meeting in each city and town nationally this year to enable discussion about this kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), in view of an efficient process, and multiple benefits.

2. **Local advocates:** These might be needed in connection with some pastors' group to help ensure that all possible efforts from local churches and associated charities are included. This is important because what is being created here will reflect upon the churches.

If the initial task (survey) can be completed in a timely manner, many benefits can be enabled, possibly even including a national report on the contribution of faith groups to the welfare of the nation, for the Prime Minister and cabinet on the first day of their term in office following the elections. Local church leaders are busy and administration is not everyone's strong point.

3. **Ongoing (annual) donations.** 'Hope Project' (of which 'HeLP Project' is a subset) is a faith venture, serving a united Church. Annual donations are needed to enable its three public-facing engagements, which are Hope Project Christmas, Hope Project Easter and HeLP Project. These are highly intentional and efficient initiatives — with multiple benefits beyond the public-facing media. Annual support is needed.



## *How do you rebuild the walls of an entire city?*

Nehemiah 3:28 says "...the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house."

Different people, families and groups all chose — at the same point in time, to repair a part of the wall. Together they achieved the task in a remarkable 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15).

An initiative, with multiple outcomes, is in front of us. Could we please achieve this together?



**To upload your information:**  
[AllTogether.co.nz/helpproject](https://AllTogether.co.nz/helpproject)

**To donate:**  
[AllTogether.co.nz/donate](https://AllTogether.co.nz/donate)

**To stay informed:**  
[AllTogether.co.nz/updates](https://AllTogether.co.nz/updates)





HopeProject  
**CHRISTmas**



HopeProject  
**Easter GRACE**

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G

# 2022 REPORT

The most recent Hope Project Easter and Christmas media efforts went very well. Our thanks again go to all who participated, donated or helped in some way to enable these. God's people are amazing!

The Easter booklet delivery again highlighted how willing churches nationwide are to work together, in service to their cities and towns.

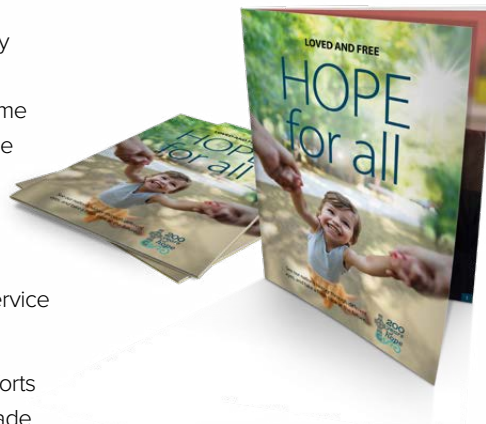
At Christmas, inspirational creative efforts to keep 'Christ' in 'Christmas' were made by individuals, churches and businesses.

Levels of engagement from the public with Hope Project media continue to be very positive.

More details are in a formal report from the Shining Lights Trust found via the Report image at [AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject](http://AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject)

## Looking forward

- **Hope Project Easter 2023** — This will again involve TV, web and a booklet delivery which will be achieved via volunteers in about 90 cities and towns — while the delivery will again be paid for in smaller towns and all rural areas.
- **HeLP Project 2023** — With data collected February to August, public media engagement will be built a step at a time — in keeping with the pace of data and donations.



- **Hope Project Christmas 2023** — This will again encourage the creativity of many, catalysing the spread of great ideas, while proactively engaging in the social media space.

## Where help is needed

- **...the Easter delivery**  
[AllTogether.co.nz/volunteer](http://AllTogether.co.nz/volunteer)
- **... the financing of these national gospel efforts**  
[AllTogether.co.nz/donate](http://AllTogether.co.nz/donate)
- **...ensuring communication lines exist to your local church**  
[AllTogether.co.nz/updates](http://AllTogether.co.nz/updates)

For a fuller report on the work of the Shining Lights Trust, click the report cover image at [AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject](http://AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject).

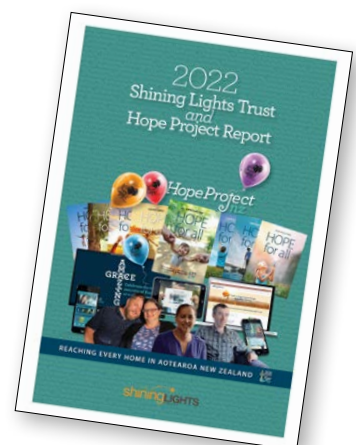
## Hope Project Stories

### ELDERLY MAN CHOOSES CHRIST

An elderly man asked his daughter to read the 'Hope For All' booklet from the letterbox out loud to him. Having done so he said to her, I want to pray that prayer — and then did so.

### THAT PRAYER AT THE END OF YOUR BOOKLET HAD REAL MEANING IN IT FOR ME

A lady contacted us to say she was awaiting an operation — and nervous. This had caused her to pray. Finding this years' booklet in her letterbox she read it — and was touched. She told us that it was specifically the prayer at the end of the booklet that had real meaning to her. She therefore wanted to read more about Jesus. 'Could I have a New Testament please?'





## VARIOUS OTHER REQUESTS FOR HARD COPIES OF THE BIBLE

While most will simply download a Bible app, the comments of those who request hard copies of the Bible are encouraging in what they reveal. Most are not yet Christian believers, while others are new to the faith. For example, one asked, "Could I please have a hard-copy Bible. I feel I need to open myself back up — that's why I'm looking for a Bible." Another asked, "Can I please get a hard copy of the New Testament? I read a pamphlet that was in my mailbox. Thank you for that, it was a very good read." Another said, "Hi... I would like a hard copy of the New Testament. I'm a new Christian. I love reading about God, and I love books."

## IMMEDIATELY POSITIVE UPON SEEING BOOK — "A MATERIAL I TRUST"

A story was passed on to us of a booklet offered in person to a Māori lady while delivering to letterboxes. She responded "These are very good" — and was even more delighted when opening it and seeing the story of Wiremu Tāmihana Tarapipipi Waharoa.

## BROUGHT A FRIEND TO HELP ME DELIVER — AND THEN THEY CAME TO CHURCH

A church member took a friend along for company when going out to deliver booklets. This caused a conversation to open up. That friend has now connected with their church.

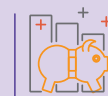
## "PEOPLE ARE JUST SO WILLING TO RECEIVE THESE BOOKLETS!"

In a piece of feedback received many times, someone wrote, "The vast majority of people passing by that I offered a booklet to were happy, even keen, to receive one. One young man responded, 'That looks great, thanks so much!'"

# HOPE PROJECT 2022 STATS



Project budget: \$571,100  
Project Income: \$660,872  
Total Expenses: \$630,872



**FINANCIAL  
PARTICIPATION**

65 churches + 345 individuals  
↑ +8.3% ↓ -10.4%

2.18 MILLION TOTAL  
**SEE TV ADS**

TV campaign audience:  
37% of 18-54yr olds  
an average of  
**3.4 TIMES**

TV OnDemand Impressions:  
**247,532** 7% ↑

BOOKLETS  
1.33 MILLION  
HOMES

Spares remaining:  
Approx 25,000

Google Ads Impressions  
**46,000**



**1006** PASTORS  
FROM  
800 CHURCHES

People  
receiving  
MONTHLY  
PRAYER  
updates:

**1772**



**4000** DELIVERY  
VOLUNTEERS  
COVERING 1,026,465 HOMES IN 90 CITIES & TOWNS

Church digital  
**ENGAGEMENT**

**WEBSITE:** AllTogether.co.nz  
(Data reflects church-audience interest and participation)

users Sermon/Study  
UNIQUE **12,861** resource users: **1497**

**PAGE VIEWS** **81,776**  
May 2021 - May 2022:

Hope Project **4,822** Christmas **5,266**

**BOUNCE RATE** **6.44%**  
(reflecting high level of engagement)

**'BECAUSE WE CARE'** Total Plays **8,719**

**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Impressions  
**2,900,664**

Reach  
**877,071**  
Engagement  
**201,024** 19.9% ↓

**Easter**  
Link Clicks up  
**20.3%**

**Alltogether**  
Total FB Reach  
**28,959**

**Christmas**  
Link Clicks up  
**151.2%**

**PAGE VIEWS  
ALL OTHER  
WEBSITES**

HopeProject.co.nz  
10,174 14,176 22,391  
2019-20 2020-21 2021-22  
58% ↑

**10 Day Challenge** **9,794**  
↑ 27.2%  
shiningLIGHTS.co.nz  
**6,226** ↓ 18.7%

**YouVersion Bible Plans**  
SUBSCRIBES COMPLETIONS  
**7,531 4,905**

**rightnow MEDIA**  
VIEWS **11,336**

**PARTNERING  
CHURCHES**

Intentional outreach-equipping: **52%**  
**People equipped: 41,600**  
(estimate — not counting efforts by non-partnering churches)

PASTORS  
GROUPS  
MEETINGS  
**55**

**engage CONFERENCE** HOSTED **9**

**CREATED**

**NEW 'Christian heritage'  
RADIO SPOTS: 28**



Total  
Videos  
Played **31,663**



# TO SEE FEWER YOUNG ADULTS LEAVING OUR CHURCHES

## Introducing, 'Why Christians believe Christianity to be true'

It is generally recognised that about two-thirds of those who come to faith in their teenage years will leave the faith in the 18 to 22 year old age bracket. Various reasons have been suggested by various studies. Three notable points are:

1. Some lack a personal **experience** of God sufficient to convince them their faith and connection to God is true and real.
2. Many struggle to find solid **reasons** to hold on to their faith in the face of (a) the arguments of 'secular humanism'/atheism from Tertiary educators and peers, (b) a growing awareness of the other religions, and (c) the challenging perception that Christian morality is itself prejudicial.
3. Many lack the Christian **support** structures needed to stand fast when confronted with the various moral and other temptations of our day. The need for those in rural towns to move to cities for study is a big factor.

### A possible mistake we've made

It has seemed to many that the public have become disinterested in hearing why we believe our faith to be true. Many therefore stopped talking about the reasons for our faith. But what if the public were disinterested because they believed it had already been proven that our faith wasn't true — and the discussion was therefore an irrelevance? Might talk about reasons for faith be still needed, *but to spark questions rather than only to answer them?*

### Toward a partial solution

What if we each decided to start talking about reasons for believing our faith to be true again — but through story rather than argumentation, and on every platform we have? What difference might this make?



## Four additional reasons this might be important

1. We provide real answers to real questions people have
2. This might help some to get beyond roadblocks to faith
3. This might help others find reasons to stay in their faith
4. We might also enjoy becoming a little more intellectually-alive in the process.

## To notice: Gospel preaching in the Bible included giving evidence

When Peter preached the gospel in Acts 2 a good portion of his time was given to talking about Messianic prophecies that Jesus had fulfilled — because they were an evidence to his Jewish audience. In Acts 3 he again preached the gospel — but this time pointing to a miracle that had just happened, because it was evidence of the truth of his message.

When we communicate the message of hope we carry, how important might it be that we also give people reasons to believe the message to be true?

## One response: A new resource — targeting young adults in NZ churches

A video and booklet series has been created which will soon be offered to NZ churches for use. With a launch date in mid-2023, it is titled, 'Why Christians believe Christianity to be true'.

- It will be useful for outreach, to be shown to people with questions.
- *Our great hope, however, is to see a copy somehow in the hands of every young adult, and older youth, in every possible NZ church.*

- We hope the process will concurrently help to catalyse a renewed interest in discussing the reasons for faith in New Zealand churches and youth groups — *through story.*

## A change of approach: From a reasoned argument to a simple story

It is possible to explain any point of reason through a story — and stories are interesting. Different platforms require different approaches. Any 'argument' for faith could therefore be replaced with a story or illustration that says the same thing — and included in sermons, discussions, small talks to groups, and conversations! These stories could sometimes be left to speak for themselves — like Jesus did with his parables.

## Some practical applications

1. **A specific programme:** The 'Why Christians believe' video and booklet series could be used from mid-2023.
2. **Church services:** For 4 to 6 weeks annually, play a short Q&A video during the offering time — after which members are encouraged to investigate answers to questions they have, because our faith is not without reason.
3. **In small groups:** A Q&A video series is selected for use. Small group members team up to discuss and present their answers to a proposed question. The relevant Q&A video is then played and responses compared. Asking 3 to 5 questions weekly, over four weeks, would give the group a simple, fun and meaningful discussion series. This could be repeated annually in youth groups.

## 4. Utilise ministries like Thinking Matters

**Matters:** Thinking Matters run annual apologetics conferences in at least 5 cities, monthly topical 'forge' nights in a dozen cities, and have a myriad of resources at their website.

## In summary

Problem identified: Our society is teaching the young that Christianity is not only fundamentally untrue and therefore irrelevant, but also a potential problem. We are losing many of our young.

A partial solution: We could develop a new culture amongst ourselves in which we clearly and regularly explain why we believe what we do — in unison choosing to become experts at doing this through story, on all platforms available to us.

## RESOURCES

### "Why Christians believe Christianity to be true"

A series of seven 15min videos with matching booklets and discussion guides, with a mid-year launch hosted by Thinking Matters. Everything will be free online — including pdfs of the booklets, while hard copies will be available for sale.

[WhyChristiansBelieve.nz](http://WhyChristiansBelieve.nz)

**THINKING MATTERS**  
EQUIP. ENCOURAGE. ENGAGE.

### A NZ-based 'reasons' ministry

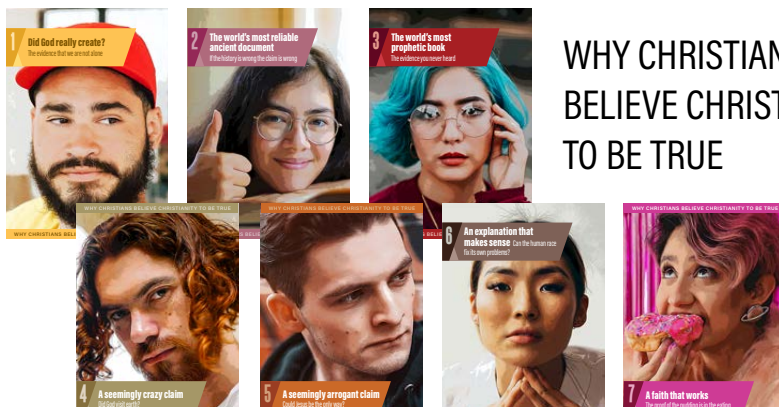
Conferences are run annually in places like Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Their website includes Q&A videos, articles and podcasts.

[thinkingmatters.org.nz](http://thinkingmatters.org.nz)



### Faith Q&A series

[10DayChallenge.co.nz/faithqa](http://10DayChallenge.co.nz/faithqa)





# GOD IN OUR HISTORY — *a journey to work to preserve*

By Dave Mann

**Across the past decade, many hundreds of churches from Kaitaia to Invercargill came to a new understanding of the significance of the gospel in our nation's bicultural history. The journey has been significant for many reasons.**

The gospel was invited — not imposed. De-colonisation therefore doesn't have to mean 'de-Christianisation'. The gospel was spread by Māori to Māori, and throughout the length of our nation. While we have missionaries who should be hailed as 'heroes' for the good they did, many of our most amazing heroes of faith were Māori chiefs and leaders who embraced the principles of love and grace from the gospel, and in the hardest of circumstances. Ways of violence turned to peace. A treaty was put in place to stop or hinder the colonisation of Māori. Incredible courage and grace was shown as that treaty was terribly betrayed. We have learnt many things, and these are important things.

**However, this can now be undermined.**

Some feel the Treaty is being politicised. The topic is so sensitive it can barely be mentioned. The effects are rarely spoken of, but they are real. Meanwhile, there is something valuable here to protect and sustain.

As a possible approach for consideration:

## 1. *The land issues are easy*

Our nation could give many times the compensation to our Māori, and it still wouldn't be anywhere near what was lost. We spend about 50 billion dollars<sup>6</sup> on social security (pensions) and welfare annually — while we allocated 2 billion as a nation for Treaty settlements for all time. It is an expression of grace from Māori to the Crown when Treaty settlements are accepted.

## 2. *Some of the governance issues are very difficult*

To take sides strongly is likely to divide churches, because the issues are 'alive' and being fed in public debate and opinion in this season. Many don't know what to think. Some have strong views — in different directions. This might need time.

## 3. *The gospel issues are important*

Simply hearing a story of great faith and grace by one of our tipuna / ancestors is enough to cause some Māori to turn to Jesus — because it re-frames the way they see Jesus in relation to colonisation. Meanwhile the same stories can cause non-Māori to change their views on aspects of our history, and to engage with a more open heart and mind.

So, let's focus on what is most important! As the Church, we have a story to tell. Our job is to lift Jesus up.

- There will always be political division. Every nation has this.
- We all have a vote at election time, and can write to an MP.
- None of us can control the outcomes.
- We can however help people find Jesus — and that lasts forever.

**It really is what's most important!**

<sup>6</sup> Government expenditure in NZ was \$49.9 billion for Social security (pensions) and welfare; \$20.5 billion for health, \$17.6 billion for education.



# When youth leaders unite

Youth ministry is getting harder — and youth ministry is important! It's often recognised that about 85% of those who come to faith do so before age 20, while the majority of those who come to faith from non-church homes do so in their early teenage years.

Godtalk.nz exists to echo a simple vision: Where youth leaders unite, their youth groups and witness can be strengthened in their city or town. Anyone can own this vision, while various resources exist to support it.

## Step 1: Youth leaders take a step to unite:

If youth leaders meet together in each city or town they'll last longer for starters! If someone is willing to cook a great free breakfast as often as the youth leaders are willing to meet — all a current youth leader needs to do is facilitate a regular gathering.

## Step 2: Outreach equipping in every youth group:

This united goal is important. This also falls over very quickly if not intentionally encouraged because youth leaders change regularly. Youth leaders could agree together to make

outreach an intentional focus in their groups, including annual equipping for their conversations about faith.

## Step 3: Christian youth connect and meet together in every High School:

Youth leaders can catalyse this if they see the vision, while believing in the potential of their youth. Youth can meet to pray for their school, after which they talk about and do whatever they feel God would want them to, to represent him well in their school.

## Step 4: Combined youth events:

These can add momentum to everything by bringing profile to the existence of church youth groups, and are needed to help to draw bigger crowds in, to hear about the importance and value of this faith and hope we carry.

## Can you see the need?

An ability to see beyond one's own youth group or church — to see the needs of the city, takes time, capacity and courage. However, it is needed in view of many thousands of students

in our High Schools. A faith step is needed. Together, youth leaders can accomplish more.

Find support resources and free monthly e-updates in support of this vision at [Godtalk.nz](http://Godtalk.nz)

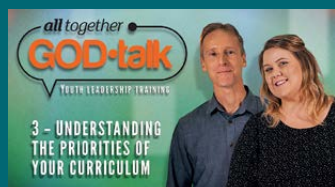
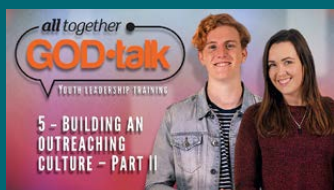


24/7 YouthWork is a truly amazing initiative and opportunity that the NZ Church is blessed with. While it is not specifically 'outreach' it is a part of our witness. It is a way we can serve our local schools, while it also provides a funding structure to support younger people who'd like to give a few years of their life to youth work — whether as a part-time job during their tertiary studies, or as an extension of their work as a youth worker in a local church.

[24-7youthwork.nz](http://24-7youthwork.nz)

## RESOURCES:

[Godtalk.nz](http://Godtalk.nz), [24-7youthwork.nz](http://24-7youthwork.nz), [Unashamed.nz](http://Unashamed.nz), [SUNZ.org.nz/youth](http://SUNZ.org.nz/youth), [Catalyst Youth](#) (FB), and all the denominational youth support structures.





## Free concise 'Conversational outreach' equipping videos and discussion guides

The 'Because We Care' series videos can be played during church services — or used in small groups with the provided discussion guides. Sixteen 5-minute videos currently exist.



ONLINE: [AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos](http://AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos)

There's never *not* a good time to equip your members

**'Conversational Outreach' & 'Teamwork' sermon series to build faith and enable engagement**

Full outlines, powerpoints, social adverts and small group discussions come with these four-part sermon series.

DOWNLOAD HERE

**Stop talking!**  
Start listening & asking  
Everyday spiritual conversations



DOWNLOAD HERE



Download for free at  
[AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies](http://AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies)

## Changing church culture is hard!

Here's a video series for pastors and their leadership teams outlining a simple and practical leadership strategy to help church leaders build an authentic outreaching culture.



**Outreaching CULTURE**  
A Leadership Strategy

ONLINE: [AllTogether.co.nz/atconsulting](http://AllTogether.co.nz/atconsulting)

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