

2024

OUTREACH

TODAY

Great programmes are no match for a healthy culture

KNOWING OUR
MESSAGE – A
COMMON NEGLECT?

FAMILY, MARRIAGE,
PARENTING – AN
UNDERUTILISED
GATEWAY

FOUR PISTONS TO
OUTREACH – A
HOLISTIC VIEW

CITY AND TOWN
PASTORS' GROUPS
– INTEGRAL TO
MISSION

DO CHURCH SMALL
GROUPS HAVE A
GOD-GIVEN
MISSION?

STORYTELLING
– RESTORING
THE SPIRITUAL
CONSCIOUSNESS
OF OUR NATION

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

Matthew 5:16

INTRODUCTION

Intentionality, outreach and results

Our nation's churches do many amazing things in the area of outreach. However, if we wanted to do better, how might we?

The key word for a disciple is choice. It is through our choices that we grow. By contrast, the key word for a disciple-maker is intentionality. The role of a disciple-maker is to intentionally create situations in which those learning are presented with choices.

In educational theory it's recognised that for actual learning to take place, repetition and consistency in attempted applications are needed. Positive results in disciple-making are therefore significantly connected to the intentionality of the disciple-maker. This includes their ability to be consistent in what they are saying, doing and encouraging – knowing that it's our longer-term habits that shape character and behaviour, which delivers results.

To illustrate: A programme or message delivered today can be forgotten by tomorrow. In contrast, intentional habits purposed to impart the same message over time could see it remembered, embraced and then applied for a lifetime.

Intentionality is therefore key if we want results.

This particular publication is about ways we could become more *intentional* in our outreach. It is about working smarter rather than harder. It is about focusing on creating the kinds of contexts out of which people grow – rather than only running good programmes. The principles discussed have relevance to churches, denominations, church small groups, youth groups and individuals.

The articles are also somewhat sequential, together painting a multi-faceted picture based on the belief that fruitfulness in outreach is the product of many things working together.

We hope these brief articles help and encourage!

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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, AllTogether.co.nz, Godtalk.nz, 10DayChallenge.co.nz, HopeProject.co.nz, WhyChristiansBelieve.nz

The 'four pistons' of our outreach – a holistic view

When it comes to outreach, a multi-faceted approach is a good approach. It will take the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.

Here are four pistons of outreach mobilisation – each having its unique place in outreach.

- #1 – The individual
(The most important)
- #2 – The church small group
(The home base)
- #3 – The congregation
(The starting point)
- #4 – The Combined / united
endeavour (The majority reach)

The most important point is that our greater effectiveness in outreach isn't in any one of these pistons – but instead in all of them working together.

Piston #3 has unique place as the starting place for outreach mobilisation.

It is the role of all leaders to ensure that the mission of their organisation is in fact the mission of their organisation. The main leader in a church is often called the Pastor, Vicar or Reverend. Church leaders are responsible to ensure the mission Jesus gave (Matthew 28) is authentically, observably and measurably the mission of their own local church.

Key change in thinking: A shift from programme-based to habit-based mobilisation.

- Articles later in this publication will pick up on this point.

Piston #1 has a unique place as the most important piston

A talented pastor who can run various amazing attractional programmes is no match for 100 mobilised members. Our churches need to equip our members (Ephesians 4) to help them become confident and desiring to engage in outreaching conversations. This is a core work.

Key change in thinking: From a didactic / telling approach to a conversational approach.

- A later article will pick up on this point.

Piston #2 has a unique place as the home-base for outreach

No matter how sincere a pastor is when encouraging their members to outreach, the members can nod their heads in agreement while actually thinking about what they are going to eat for lunch. For members to be sustainably mobilised, the relational dynamics, accountability, teamwork and encouragement of the small group are needed.

Key change in thinking: The mission of the Church is also the mission of the church small group.

- A later article will pick up on this point.

Piston #4 has a unique place as the majority reach

For some math: If personal witness connects Christian messages with 10% of the non-church population in a given year, and church community ministries another 10%, this leaves 80% with no Christian trying to connect gospel messages with them – if not for initiatives sitting in the combined / public space. For some examples, consider Hope Project, Life TV, the work of Rhema Media and combined church efforts like larger Christmas events in parks. Efforts like these are also important because if people only hear negative things about our churches they'll believe what they hear. We need to speak up and engage to bring a balance.

Key change in thinking: The local church is not the hope of the world. The Church is – and there is a difference.

Two later articles will pick up on this point.

And the overarching point? All pistons are needed! How could we bring them all to greater health and life?

Knowing our own message – a common neglect



The word ‘gospel’ simply means ‘good news’. Do you know for a fact that every member of your church could communicate the Christian message simply and clearly if asked? The members of many congregations could not. While it is challenging to say, it is hard to think of something more fundamental to outreach than this.

The good news that we carry as God’s Church is – in a word – about Jesus! Because God loves us he became the solution to our problem. And the core of our problem? Separation from him due to our wrongdoing – leading to a multiplicity of moral, relational and other problems.

Communicating this core message can be achieved in 30 to 90 seconds. It is therefore possible to see almost every member of a congregation capable of explaining their belief in a conversation.

To illustrate (a 45 second example):

Think of the words (1) Creation, (2) Fall, (3) Jesus, (4) Restoration, and then explain each in a single sentence. For example...

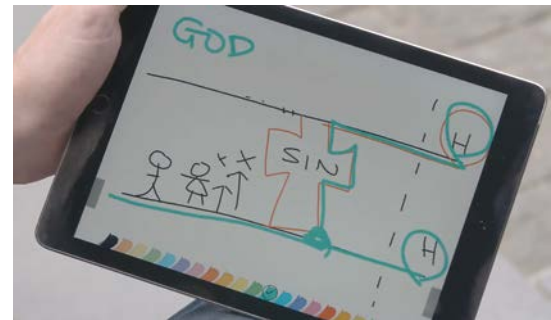
- [Creation] Christians believe God created the world and is perfect, and he gave us free will so we’d have the ability to love.
- [Fall] ...but we used that freewill to do things that were selfish, and this wrecked our relationship with God, each other and our planet – making the mess we see.
- [Jesus] ...However, because God really does love us, he decided to become the solution – and that’s what Christmas and Jesus’ death and resurrection, remembered at Easter, are about. God took a punishment we deserved to make possible...
- [Restoration] ...our restoration to relationship with him, each other and also our planet – and with an eternal perspective in view.

- [Evidence] What personally convinced me of this message was...

Certainly more could be said – but that is the ‘nuts and bolts’ of it. Discussing evidences, and asking questions, might then follow.

I recall a pastor getting the revelation that he hadn’t fulfilled his most basic role if his members couldn’t simply explain what they believed to their friends and family. He surveyed his members and this confirmed that most could not.

So he decided to equip them utilising a drawing which – if explained in words – covers the basic message. (For a similar drawing see *Because We Care* –



Series 1: Video #4 at AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members). Teaching this one Sunday he had everyone practice in pairs, and then invited an elderly person and an 8 year old onto the stage to demonstrate. Over the following few months he periodically invited someone on stage to demonstrate again – and succeeded in his goal!

To make the point, this became a turning-point in the outreaching efforts of that congregation. This most-basic equipping is maybe like a ‘starting line’.

Knowing how to explain our core beliefs simply is a simple thing. What if our churches decided to follow the above pastor’s example?

Knowing why we believe – enables confidence and competence

Our churches still lose about two-thirds of our young adults. A primary cause has been identified as a lack of known reasons for believing this faith to be true.

For example, a study called 'Fall out' by Creation Magazine found a direct connection between young adults at university who stayed in their faith and those who had been taught rational reasons for believing our planet and life to have been created. In fact, *every single young person who said their church or family had explained rational reasons for believing in a Creator-God was still in their faith. This finding is significant!* Concurrently, many others were found in the study who had left their earlier faith.

>> How hard would it be to address this known factor behind the loss of young adults?

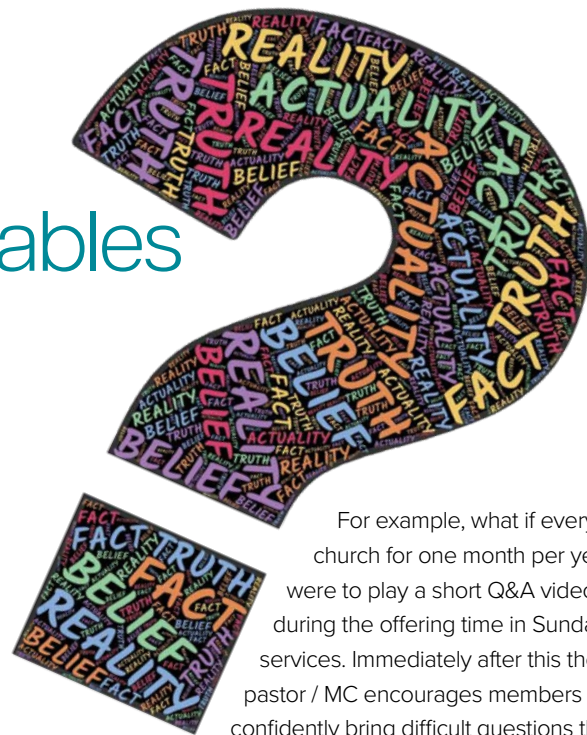
Knowing why we believe what we believe is important for other reasons too. A person will lack conviction and strength in their faith if they aren't convinced it is true. They will also lack confidence and competence for Christian witness. I mean, why stand up for something you're not fundamentally convinced about – or can't explain?

This lack of knowledge therefore feeds into an unhealthy culture of public silence from Christians about their faith. Our neglect in this area of learning while living in a sceptical culture has been costly.

Building a new culture

A culture of confidence in the faith can be established – but this won't come about through one-off teachings, or even a focused year of talking about the topic. People forget most of what they hear! **To turn this tide, talking about reasons for believing our faith needs to become a habit.***

HABITS
BUILD
CULTURE



For example, what if every church for one month per year, were to play a short Q&A video* during the offering time in Sunday services. Immediately after this the pastor / MC encourages members to confidently bring difficult questions they have about life and faith to others, to seek answers. This annual habit would feed into a culture of investigation and confidence.

A leadership choice

Videos, booklets and discussion resources exist for churches* that can help. In the links below other straight-forward habits are suggested. What if we chose to address this known area of weakness across our churches?

* Resources:

- **Four leadership habits to build a culture of confidence in the rationality of our faith:** See AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith.
- **A new resource – 'Why Christians believe Christianity to be true':** This 7-part NZ-made video / booklet / discussion series is free online – including pdfs of the booklets (with print options available). It is suitable to use with youth groups, young adults groups and church small groups. See WhyChristiansBelieve.nz
- **A ministry of note – Thinking Matters:** Thinking Matters run half a dozen conferences annually, giving access to quality apologetics speakers and more. Details at ThinkingMatters.org.nz
- **Faith Q&A Videos:** Find 27 NZ-made videos at 10DayChallenge.co.nz/faithqa. Find 13 NZ-made videos via the Thinking Matters YouTube channel.



The key to great conversations is great questions

Typically we learn conversational skills from our parents and significant others. But what if a family doesn't model good conversational skills – while the kids grow up looking at screens? The good news is, conversational skills can be taught and learnt!

Conversational skills are vital to Christian outreach. A notable change in approach to outreach across the past few decades was from a didactic / telling approach to a conversational approach. At one time most people believed in a good God. Today most people question that. Christian witness requires more than an explanation of our message. It's about engaging in a journey with people, to help them every day, and in every way, to take steps toward Jesus.

Who could we learn conversational skills from? Fortunately for us, God's Son, Jesus, was a master conversationalist!

Were we to define Jesus' 'method' for engaging with people, we see that he (1) asked questions (2) with an ear open to the Spirit. It was a conversational approach, and a Spirit-led approach. To define the conversational dynamic further, he asked questions, told stories and made intriguing statements. To note it also, every conversation was different because every person was different!

A study of Jesus' conversations can reveal much.

Many people feel lost or stuck within their witness to others. Some, not knowing what to say, talk too much - while others remain silent. Both responses can be a problem. The key to great conversations is great questions. It is also possible to talk through questions with very little need for statements. This can be useful where views differ.

In considering Jesus' conversations, it's surprising to note how many times the Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) record him asking a question. Given these accounts are brief summaries of the conversations that took place, it reflects he really was a question-asker!

Some questions we could consider are: (i) What do you mean by that? (ii) Where did you get that idea from? (iii) Have you considered...? These three questions can open a conversation up. This helps investigate another person's beliefs, after which an alternative way of thinking can be

suggested. Many across our nation can already testify how learning in this area led to a new confidence in their witness.

What if we were to make an intentional choice as Christian believers and church leaders to become 'experts' in conversational skills suiting witness in our own nation? Equipping God's people to engage in their own nation is at the very core of what a church leader is there to do.

Resources:

- **Video series:** 'Because We Care' – a collection of 5min conversational – equipping videos suitable for playing during church services or in small groups with discussion guides – AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members
- **Books:** *Because We Care* by Dave Mann, *Elephant in the Room* by Dave Mann, *Tactics* by Gregory Koukl, *God Space* by Doug Pollock, *Conversational Evangelism* by David Geisler.
- **Sermon and small group resource:** AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies
- **16 short bulletin-sized articles:** AllTogether.co.nz/printmaterial/



CHAPTER 5

Intentional habits key to sustainable outreaching culture

For a few decades 'evangelism training' in NZ was relegated to the Saturday seminar – which even the pastor didn't attend. Something was clearly wrong. Our understanding of our God-given mission had become strangely disconnected within our changing culture. The training content was also primarily about how to share the gospel while the felt need of many Christians was for conversational skills to even start an authentic two-way spiritual conversation. However, the methodology of our equipping also needed addressing.

Somehow we had justified shifting the equipping of Christian believers for their God-given mission to Saturday seminars that were attended by only a few – when the mission of the Church is logically a needed central focus for our pulpits. These trainings were also one-off events – so what was taught was soon forgotten. What then is the solution – *and how could it be made easy?* The answer is in *understanding that habits build culture, not programmes!*

People are said to remember 10% of what they hear, 40% of what they say and 60 to 70% of what they do. A habit-based rather than programme-based approach is needed!

Educators in our public schooling system could teach our churches a thing or two here. Consider a Primary School teacher who has had to study for three or more years in Tertiary training – to teach 7 and 8 year olds *things they already knew themselves when they were just 10 years old*. Why is all that extra education needed? It is principally to understand educational theory, because there's a difference between telling people things and actually teaching them. Discipleship is no different.

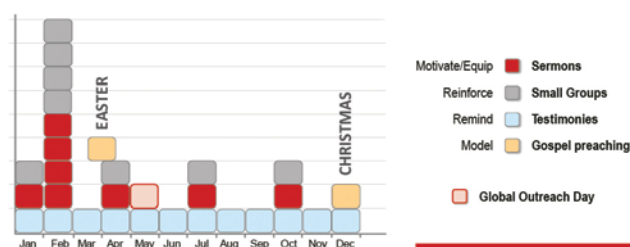
What a habit-based approach to member mobilisation might look like

1. What if members were motivated and equipped **annually** through a pulpit series focused on equipping for local mission?



2. What if these teachings were **intentionally reinforced** through the church's small group discussions?
3. What if the telling of testimonies (where someone engaged a conversation with the intent of encouraging faith) were shared **once per month** in Sunday services – as a habit? The leader or MC then briefly reiterates an equipping point made earlier in the year to help it shift into longer-term memory.
4. What if we gave effort to **reviving dynamic, creative and compelling** gospel preaching from our pulpits?

Applied consistently, these four habits could build an outreaching culture into the life and witness of the members, achieving more than any number of programmes – and this is worthy because it always has and always will take people to reach people!



Resources:

- **Web:** Church and small leaders are encouraged study the vision, videos and other resources found at and via AllTogether.co.nz/pastors – which connects to AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups. For youth leaders see Godtalk.nz
- **Reading:** The above habits are articulated in 'Elephant in the Room' by Dave Mann. A free pdf can be downloaded at AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks
- **Reading:** Consider also the book *Organic Outreach*, by Kevin Harney.

CHAPTER 4 Conversational skills for hostile environments

For we who hold this faith dear, the growing negative attitudes toward our faith that are being fed within our society are a challenge to adapt to. Likewise consider the wider cultural trend of seeking to silence voices that some don't want to hear. It's only natural that many will fall silent to avoid tension. The problem is that this silence can be very costly. The unchallenged sceptical belief of today quickly becomes the intolerant dictate of the tyrant tomorrow. Courage to engage conversations is necessary if good is to prevail – and also if the gospel is to prevail!

The importance of conversational skills for hostile environments

While few churches may have taught this topic in their pulpits, small groups or youth groups yet, it has relevance and we need look no further than Jesus to find a role-model to follow.

Jesus in conflict

Because Jesus was both perfectly clear in his thinking and secure in who he was, he was uniquely clear-thinking in the way he handled conflict. He didn't relate to every person in the same way. Every conversation was different because every person was different. He asked questions to discern what was in a person's heart; to work out how to best encourage them. To summarise,

*Jesus engaged with the interested,
while only intriguing the disinterested and sceptical
and deflecting the hostile.*

Jesus also intentionally created conflict at times. For example, he challenged the religious leaders to their face, or drove out those selling in the Temple courts. However, he picked these battles carefully – sometimes also retreating or saying nothing.

For an example, when asked about paying taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22), Jesus discerned that it was a toxic question and a trap. If he said anything to undermine Rome's authority he could end up dead. It wasn't therefore wise to answer the question directly. Sometimes we are wise not to answer questions directly too.

Jesus therefore replied to their question with a question. 'Why are you trying to trap me?' He then deflected with profound wisdom, asking to see a coin, getting them to state whose face was on it, then saying, "give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." The point is that Jesus was able to thrive despite cultural prejudices and misunderstandings – and so can we!

Jesus said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). If our environment really is becoming more hostile, the solution is simple: We need to adapt!

What if our churches and church movements were to be intentional in their learning and teaching on the conversational skills of Jesus for hostile environments?

Resources:

- **Short videos:** 'Because We Care' – Series 3: AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members
- **Sermon and discussion series:** 'Hostile Environments' – AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies

Restoring the mission of the church small group

In the current Western church environment it is rarely recognised that the mission of God's Church is also the mission of the church small group. It is certainly true that church small groups serve a few purposes. For example they are also places of care and of learning. However, the fact remains that the mission of the Church is the mission of the church small group!

This begs a question. How might we *reinsert* the mission of the church small group into the church small group without overriding other good things? We would need to change something in the way we think about the role of the church small group!

Here are some leadership habits for church small groups – to restore a focus on outreach, while leveraging the naturally relational dynamic of these groups.

Habit 1: Establish the goal (annually)

Having a goal motivates action. E.g. At the start of each year have every small group member (i) list the names of five friends they'd like to encourage toward faith. Next to each name (ii) write out possible hindrances to faith and (iii) interests they have. Use the hindrances for prayer and possible conversations. Interests highlight possible connection points – both individually and for the small group together.

Habit 2: Pray (monthly)

On the first week of every month, pause for 2 or 3 minutes in your small group meeting to pray for your five people.

Habit 3: Testimony about Christian witness (monthly)

On the third week of every month ask if anyone has had an opportunity to initiate a spiritual conversation recently. This habit will remind people of their mission – while the testimony also encourages. Outreach skills previously taught could then be reiterated.

Habit 4: One or two socials per term (Quarterly)

By noting the interests of your group members' 'five', a group leader with 10 members would have the interests of 50 friends listed. Twice per term plan a social activity, based around common interests. This creates 'bridging events', to which new friends can be invited into a relational and relaxed environment. Conversations would naturally arise out of this in time.

Habit 5: Revision before major church outreach events or services (twice-annually)

In the weeks prior to a regular church outreach (E.g. Easter or Christmas) intentionally give ten minutes weekly to

- (i) revising a conversational or gospel skill
- (ii) planning a social for yourselves together and
- (iii) praying for your five friends – who you could invite to your upcoming church event, service or programme.

To make the point, the above monthly and annual habits would establish an outreaching CULTURE in a group. It is possible to reinsert the mission of the church small group into the church small group. What if we were to become intentional in the equipping and ongoing encouragement of our leaders to do this?

Resources:

- **Web:** AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups
- **Book:** Elephant in the Room – download PDF (or purchase a hardcopy) via AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks
- **Courses:** While various possible discussion resources exist on the topic, until we've embraced leadership habits that can inculcate our desired values, longer-term change will not be catalysed.



If results matter, we must focus on our youth – but how?

It is generally recognised that over 80% of those who come to faith do so before the age of 20.

- While those growing up in Christian families mostly come to faith as children, those from non-church families primarily come to faith in their teenage years.
- The most significant age group for this is the 11 to 14yos – with religious worldview now largely set by that age.
- Our own research as the Shining Lights Trust across NZ in 2016 revealed that NZ church youth ministry attendance was sitting at about one-third to one-quarter of what it was 25 years ago.

Youth ministry is therefore logically a wise area of focus for outreach.

When looking at NZ youth ministry, the outreaching focus is notably weak in many places. One factor is the increased number of emotional challenges young people face. Many young people come from broken homes. For this reason youth leaders are overwhelmed by the complex issues their youth are facing. Youth leaders on average last about 18 months to 2 years in the role. Our denominational (and other) youth networks have therefore had to adapt to support them. The outreaching focus has suffered.

How could this be changed? What if senior pastors (SPs) and their elders' boards were to take responsibility for ensuring certain practices were sustained in their church's youth ministries? This could be achieved by inducting each new leader into certain understandings and practices when they start.

Godtalk.nz exists for this specific reason, to help fill a specific gap.

#1. The SP gets each new youth leader to watch the 12 x 5 minute videos at Godtalk.nz/leadership. They then discuss these.

#2. The SP then asks the youth leader to imitate their own example by committing one month per year to **equipping** for outreach (resources at Godtalk.nz/equipping) and to run some outreaching events.

#3. The youth leader is then encouraged (or helped) to **network** with other youth leaders in their city or town.

- For example, the SP asks an elder and their spouse to volunteer to cook the youth leaders of their city or town a generous breakfast once a term, to help catalyse their meeting. Youth leaders will last longer as a result.



- Youth groups could unite in a vision to encourage their youth to meet and pray in their respective **schools**.
- They could run some **combined outreach** / social / sporting events – to strengthen youth ministry and its profile in their community.

It is our habits that build culture – not programmes. What if we were to more intentionally support our ever-changing youth leaders, to see an outreaching culture established and sustained in our youth groups?

Resources:

- Godtalk.nz
- 24-7youthwork.nz
- sunz.org.nz/youth
- Denominational youth networks

City and town pastors' groups – integral to outreach

As articulated at the beginning of this publication, the unique place of the united Church in outreach is as the 'majority reach'. Initiatives in this space are an important and needed part of our work as churches – with a plausible 80% of the non-church-attending population in mind.

The role of local church unity is also important in this regard. The Apostle Paul said, *"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel..."* (Philippians 1:27)

God's intent was that we work together when needed. Our unity was to go beyond relationships and prayer to outwardly-focused action. The same theme is found in Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17. His prayer wasn't only for the believers – but for those who would yet believe through them. The goal wasn't unity for unity's sake – but unity for mission's sake!

The role of churches together is becoming more important as the Christian faith is pushed increasingly to the margins of our society, being subtly and yet consistently maligned within the narratives of public media and education. Our story is no longer being told. Awareness of the specifically Christian origins of cultural blessings like our high levels of prosperity, equality, freedom and charity are being

lost. Negative stories are regularly told – while thousands of positive stories are left untold. It's a slow but definite downward progression – *unless interrupted*.

An overlooked role for churches together in this environment is therefore to be seen. Being seen brings reputation, counters negatives stories, and establishes connections that could see churches invited back to the decision-making tables of our communities.

Here's a time-proven approach* for being seen. *Find a need in your city that you could meet together – and meet it!* This might be a community event to strengthen community cohesion – like a larger well-coordinated Light Party or children's carnival. The public see that the churches care and are approachable, while community leaders see that churches are capable of working together and connections are made. Sometimes it is meeting a significant community need that opens doors – like Te Hāhi* is doing so brilliantly (a support service to victims of crime in support of local police). Some churches in Invercargill* recently ran a 'serve your community day', with 250 volunteers, running 18 projects in partnership with five schools, a neighbourhood regeneration group, an environmental group, council, local marae and three other charities. Efforts included planting 2500 trees, cleaning streets and parks, painting and building, and a morning tea for police, fire and ambulance staff.

There is sometimes a difference between having the 'light of Christ' – and knowing how to *'let your light shine that others might see...'* This kind of engagement can be genuinely impactful.

Let's work more intentionally together to find and meet notable needs!

* Resources:

- **Web:** AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups – including links to a blog on the Invercargill event, and an interview with Roy Crowne of HOPE Together UK following a tour of various NZ city and town pastors' groups – regarding 'a time-tested approach'. For Te Hāhi – tehahi.org.nz. For pastors committed to unity the SLT facilitate a closed group FB page. Search "Mahi Ngatahi - Working Together"
- **Book:** *A House for his Glory* by Colin Shaw – <https://www.citybycity.co.nz/resources/citybycity-2nd-edition-ebook-2/>
- **Book:** *In One Spirit* by Dave Mann – available as a PDF download at AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks The last chapter articulates a possible 'vocabulary' for unity that is useful by way of what it can enable.
- **Geographic teams:** Support the initiatives of those actively serving the united efforts of churches via the 80+ geographic pastors' groups that exist.



National unity in witness – a necessary work

United Church structure

Wider Church unity is sometimes a difficult topic. Most local congregations have connection with a denomination of some kind. This can add strength. These organisations (denominations) stand beside God's Church – each being connected to a sprawling network of individual congregations. They bring (1) accountability, (2) training and (3) support to those churches. Where denominations do this well it can add strength to those congregations.

However, denominations cannot lead in mission. This is because mission is geographically identified. This is therefore where and why united vision and endeavour are necessary. For example, it is not the prerogative of the Baptist or Presbyterian or C3 churches in Tauranga to reach Tauranga for Jesus. It is instead the responsibility of all Christian churches *together* to do that.

We therefore have TWO church structures working together. One is denominational, while the other is the united Church in each location. Like a train running on two railway tracks, God's Church does likewise. The complication is that the denominational track is also 'broken' into many different denominational movements – just as the united Church into many distinct geographically identified groups.

So, how might we find greater synergy together, to see national vision and strategy enabled and implemented where needed?

SERVANT LEADERSHIP TO THE UNITED CHURCH

Does God raise up servant-leaders to facilitate in his wider united Church, bringing vision and enabling outcomes? Certainly he does and has!

The Book of Judges gives us an example for this. Israel had no king physically on earth – because God was their King. The New Testament Church is the same, with Jesus as our King. The people of Israel were in their separate tribes – just as we who are in God's Church are separated by geography and denomination. But when needed, God was capable of raising up Deborah, Ehud, Jephthah, Samson or Gideon for a national cause. These people were often not from within the tribal structures. The onus was therefore on the people to recognise who God had raised up; to empower them. Similarly for us, God can raise up *different people at different times for different things*. This is how capital-C Church leadership works. The onus is upon us all to recognise a few of these people and to give support, so these individuals can do what they are called to.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO NATIONALLY UNITED ENDEAVOURS

There are different ways we can work in unity. One way is through intentional unity in common goals – which we each then pursue in our own way. With this approach the autonomy of each leader isn't 'encroached upon'. Consider the shared goal of valuing the Treaty / Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Christian dynamic in our bicultural history. This goal was broadly accepted around 2013, with a notable national change in perspectives resulting since. This success has enabled many to stand more confidently in their faith in the public square. The idea of uniting in simple and sensible *national* goals is therefore a plausible approach, worthy of further consideration.

Another example is unity in getting a task done. Consider the need for engagement with matters affecting the welfare of everyday New Zealanders – like those discussed in Parliament and on public media. Key individuals have initiated efforts like Family First or the Free Speech Union, to serve a valuable purpose in their time. Other individuals might do likewise on various specific topics. NZCN play a representative role, engaging in partnership with denominational leaders to ensure a Christian perspective is stated and heard by politicians and media on some issues. For another example, many saw value in the recent visit from Franklin Graham, with superb events in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. Larger events like these can also reflect a wider message that the Church is still alive, well and present. The Shining Lights Trust plays a role in unity, media and other gospel spaces. Hope Project is of note, helping to maintain public awareness of the Christian dynamic behind our cultural festivals of Christmas and Easter – while also restoring awareness of the wider historical story that sits behind many of our national values. HeLP Project also sits awaiting its time, to help churches together in each location to see their story being told and heard. Campus ministries like TSCF and

Student Life serve in our Tertiary institutions – engaging on our behalf in a way individual churches would not or could not. The point is that God can raise people up for national purposes, to serve in a given season on his behalf – and ours.

IN SUMMARY...

Whether the approach is one of unity in common goals to effect broad changes, or unity in specific areas of effort, the underlying principle is the same. *God can raise up different people at different times for different things.* If we believe this, we are more likely to have eyes that can identify and support these people in their given season.

At the start of this publication it was suggested that all four 'pistons of outreach' are needed. The Church in this nation needs God to raise up individuals and teams who will engage with city and national trends and needs – rather than only congregational or denominational ones. In fact, with Government and public media ever-more excluding the voice and story of our faith, this is maybe more important now than ever.

May our ability to function 'as one, in one Spirit for the faith of the gospel' (Philippians 1:27), working in unity 'that the world might know' (John 17), become ever-stronger.

For more

- Four goals with 14 habits that could be easy wins for the united Church: AllTogether.co.nz/fourgoals/
- URLs relating to mentioned activities. FamilyFirst.org.nz, fsu.nz, nzchristiannetwork.org.nz, AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject, AllTogether.co.nz/helpproject, TSCF.org.nz, StudentLife.org.nz
- Consider, who might God have raised in this current season to fulfil city or national functions in service to the gospel, his Church and the wellbeing of our people?



Family, marriage & parenting – an under-utilised gateway



Family needs have never been greater in our nation – while God’s Word is full of wisdom for marriages and parenting. This is also a gateway for the gospel. What if our churches became more intentional in this area?

The point is simple. There are people within churches right across New Zealand who have wisdom regarding marriage and parenting, and for whom this topic is a primary passion. What if we were to release more of these people to serve in this specific area, bringing training and support to marriage and parenting – *with both our church members and our wider communities in view?*

Consider:

- **Marriage:** Half of all adults are married in NZ – who might be interested in a marriage course.
- **Pre-marriage:** Over 18,000 couples get married each year – who are potentially interested in pre-marriage courses. This is statistically proven to help marriages last!
- **Parenting:** 58,000 children were born last year. That’s 58,000 sets of parents

who might be interested in parenting courses related to babies, then toddlers, then children and eventually teenagers.

- **Divorce recovery:** About 7,500 couples divorced last year. That’s 15,000 adults suffering pain who might benefit from a divorce recovery course.
- **Grief recovery:** About 38,500 people died last year. That’s a lot of people who could benefit from a course on processing grief!

We live in an age of broken families, struggling parents – and unavoidable pain. This is an underutilised connection point in our Christian witness and service!

To consider:

1. What could local churches do to minister in the above areas?
2. How could churches collaborate together, to potentially offer a wider range of options to their communities each year together – which they then promote widely?

This area is a gateway for connections and reputation, while genuinely helping in a genuinely important area – and there

are likely people in nearly every church for whom this will be a primary passion!

Resources:

Research courses available via the following ministries:

FAMILYLIFE™ NZ

www.familylife.nz (Tandem Ministries)



www.alpha.org.nz

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY.



www.parentingplace.nz

DIVORCE Care

GRIEF SHARE

SINGLE & PARENTING

churchinitiative.org

STORYTELLING

– restoring the spiritual consciousness of our nation

Jesus spoke through stories. Of note, he never explained the meaning of the parables to the crowds. Their interpretation was left to the audience to work out. He did this for a few reasons – including the presence of hostile elements in his audiences.

Our audiences increasingly now include potentially ‘hostile’ elements too. Public culture is being changed. This makes wise storytelling for public spaces a skillset we could value more, model and teach in our churches. This could help many to engage more confidently, gently restoring a spiritual consciousness to the environments they work within.

To illustrate: If the topic were education, the story could be told of John Calvin who proposed an education system in which *even the poor were taught to read and write*. This was a radical new idea – the initial goal being access to the Bible so people could avoid the manipulations of a corrupted Church hierarchy. The story of the first school in NZ at Rangihoua (where Chief Ruatara invited Samuel Marsden in 1814) could then be told. Interestingly that first school taught in both Te Reo Māori and English, with both male and female students present. Forty more years on we could consider Hēni Te Kirikaramu (of the ‘Battle of Gate Pa’ fame) whose education positioned her for greatness. By age 16, living at a mission school in Auckland, she spoke Te Reo, English and French fluently, she was the administrator of the school, ran a boarding house for Māori students and was a full time teacher. Your concluding point to share: *“Education opens opportunities for people. It’s got a great history and it’s important!”*

To explain: Even in a highly secularised environment these stories would be appreciated, and the concluding point agreed upon. *However, what’s also been achieved is the revealing of a clear connection between the Christian faith and the idea of*

‘education for all’ in history. That awareness affects perspectives, and might later catalyse other conversations or questions.

A key in the approach of this example is the concluding statement, which says something everyone would agree with. For the contrast, responses would be considerably different were you to conclude with, “and that is why Christianity is so important to education”.

It is therefore possible to communicate Christian messages in secular places!

Six types of stories to consider

1. Our own life experience
2. Other people’s life experience
3. The natural world (reason, logic, science)
4. Our bicultural history
5. Our values history (freedoms, systems of justice/law, equality of races/genders, concepts of charity...)
6. The Bible.

We are reminded that ‘those who tell the history write the future’. If we’d like to see a spiritual consciousness being restored to public culture, the stories we tell can affect the perspectives of those who hear. Intentional storytelling is therefore an artform to consider, discover and value more – on all our platforms.

For more:

- **Book:** *‘The Art of storytelling and of becoming an intriguing person’*, by Dave Mann. Available for free as a PDF or audio book – AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith
- **Books about NZ values history:** See various book titles listed in the footnote at AllTogether.co.nz/storytelling



HopeProject nz

While Hope Project is one small part of what churches across NZ do in outreach, it remains unique in a couple of ways – while bringing encouragement in a number of ways.

Ten reasons to value Hope Project in your city or town

1. It keeps the 'Christ' in Christmas and Easter in the public view. If we don't choose to be visible in these seasons we will gradually lose our freedom to do so.
2. It influences public perspectives by highlighting that our faith is still alive and well. Most of the public have no connection with a church in an average year. Many will hardly know our churches exist if we are not present to be seen and engaged with.
3. It influences public perspectives through stories that show that our faith isn't all bad. Negative stories and innuendoes are given through public media and in education regularly. Complaining changes nothing, and no one else is going to tell our story for us.
4. It catalyses a genuinely national prayer walk. In each place, every residential street is covered.
5. It provides a platform for churches to get the gospel itself to most homes in their own city or town. This alone merits the effort and is a remarkable achievement by local churches.
6. It redeems the purpose of many 'community ministries' that might not otherwise communicate the Christian

message. By clearly and respectfully communicating our message this way, we keep it connected with our other efforts in which the message is not so obvious.

7. The delivery of booklets gives people new experiences in outreach. Just as Jesus sent out the 12 and the 72, this is a vital part of discipleship, and well-leveraged for such.
8. It is a unique catalyst for annual outreach equipping. This encourages efforts via hundreds of pulpits, small groups and youth groups across the nation each year.
9. The delivery is a catalyst for testimonies. These add momentum to all other outreach activities.
10. It helps Church unity move beyond talk to achieving a simple yet meaningful outcome together. The public are notably amazed by how NZ churches work together in this. It is a part of our witness.

...And beyond the above, the reach of what our churches enable together is significant – noting there are concurrent TV and web strategies. While it is a simple effort, it has broad-reaching value.

For more

- The full article – AllTogether.co.nz/whyhopeproject/
- The 2023 Annual Report – AllTogether.co.nz/hopeproject
- To donate: currently 5% of connected churches / 6% of prayer partners participate financially – AllTogether.co.nz/donate

**LET'S LOOK TOGETHER TO ALL
THAT GOD CAN YET DO!**

AllTogether.co.nz ♦ ShiningLights.co.nz ♦ Godtalk.nz ♦ HopeProject.co.nz ♦ 10DayChallenge.co.nz ♦ WhyChristiansBelieve.nz

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TRUST

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The Shining Lights Trust exists to identify gaps in the outreaching efforts of the NZ Church as a whole, to help innovation flow into some of those spaces.

Shininglights.co.nz/our-team, AllTogether.co.nz, Godtalk.nz, 10DayChallenge.co.nz, HopeProject.co.nz, WhyChristiansBelieve.nz

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