

Three points:

(1) Establish an outreaching CULTURE in your members

(The pizza base)

The first strategy for community outreach is in the discipling (growing) of those who will do the actual work. These people are your church members / congregants.

Their primary community engagement will be through their witness via their everyday interactions - with a secondary involvement in your church-run community engagement programmes.

However, regarding your community activities, these will only have an authentic spiritual component in as much as those who lead and serve in them are authentically spiritual people - equipped by you to be Christ's witnesses in the world!

A well known trap

There is a natural process by which Christian community initiatives are caused (or allowed) to go silent on their faith.

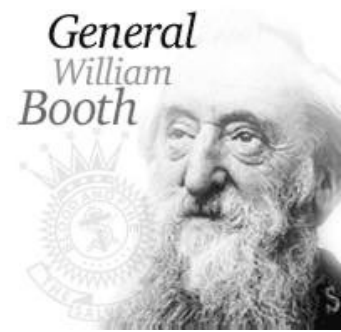
A huge number of Christian initiatives in history have been 'secularised' - and the pattern continues today.

Two directions - and why BOTH are needed

- **Remove the works of love** – and the message of love might not make sense.
- **Remove the message of love** – ...and we are in danger of being incalculably unloving!

As William Booth put it, ***"If you want to give a hungry man a (gospel) tract, put it between two pieces of bread"***.

This is to say our works of love and message of love **need to go hand in hand.**



The cultural need for us to go 'silent' about our faith in community engagement is DECREASING

- **The temptation to go silent about our faith is very real.**
 - It is natural to desire applause and respectability.
- **This 'agreeing to silence' is no longer as culturally necessary.**
 - **To typify the 1980s:**
 - There was too much assumption we were a nation of Christians.
 - Evangelism styles were also far more direct.
 - **Today:**
 - We do not assume most to be 'Christian'.
 - We have now learnt and adapted in how we communicate, showing appropriate sensitivity.
 - **Consider also:**
 - There is also now a growing appreciation of 'holistic care' -including the spiritual - throughout the entire ('secular') care industry.
 - In Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview) the wairua (spiritual) is considered to be intrinsic to life - just as it is in the Christian faith. So karakia, for example, are now culturally acceptable at the start and end of public meetings in a way that they were not back in the 1980s.
- **The point:**
 - Silence on our faith is no longer the 'prerequisite' to acceptance and funding it once seemed.
 - There are fresh models to consider and follow.

Some good examples of distinctly Christian community engagement:

- **CAP NZ**
- Check out **Journey Church in Te Kuiti** - which is one of three 'case studies' below. They are entrusted to deliver various Government services within their community.
- Research the **'HOPE Together UK'** movement. Churches across the UK are increasingly being awarded Government contracts to delivery public services with no 'religious limitation clause'!
- I wrote a short book titled **'The Art of Storytelling'** - and of becoming an intriguing person' to articulate how I have personally navigated Christian communication in secular places (Free pdf or 2 hour audio book can be found AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks).

Holistic care includes the spiritual. There is a growing appreciation of this in our culture, inclusive of an ability to respect those of the Christian faith.

How could we ensure the 'message of love' stays connected with the 'works of love'

It is about our people!

Even where a programme that has no formal space for a spiritual recognition (which is rare in bicultural NZ where karakia is standard), if the gospel is clearly in our pulpits, equipping our people, it will be in their conversations within the programme (even if not significantly so from the front).



Our selection of leaders matters

Significant Christian charities in NZ have sometimes appointed non-Christians as their leaders.

- The culture of a work will always follow the values of its leader.
- In this scenario, the 'CHRIST' is then progressively removed from the 'CHRISTian charity.'

(2) Selecting your programmes



(The pizza toppings)

With an outreaching culture established in your people - it's now time to consider your programmes.

The pizza illustration

The base: The outreaching culture - common to all churches.

The toppings: The outreaching programmes a church then selects - being different in different churches and communities.

A healthy outreaching culture is the essential foundation - but then we need connection points!

The way churches engage will typically be shaped by two things:

1. Local community needs
2. The 'raw resources' of the congregation
 - Resources includes buildings and other assets - though most significantly our people.
 - Below is a list of ideas - and then three case studies, showing what 3 amazing NZ churches are doing.

Anchoring new ministries with great leaders

In selecting the ministries we initiate, a key question is, What are our people's dreams and interests?

- If it is anchored with them, it might outlive us.
- If it is anchored with the pastor, and the pastor moves on, it might fall over.

Is what you are initiating truly the vision of some of your members - separate to your inspiring of them?

Areas of possible service:

- **Consider areas like marriage and parenting** – with possible courses on Marriage, Pre-Marriage, Parenting of babies/toddlers/children/teens, Divorce Recovery, Grief Care – as also special interest groups, AA, Counselling Centres and more.
- **Consider other age-related efforts like for children and youth** - Beyond the Sunday School and Youth Group also consider Mainly Music, after school care, Icons / Girls Brigade, Rally, A church based Scouts group, 24/7 Youthwork, etc.
- **Consider social service work that meets 'material' needs** – including Food Banks, Op Shop, CAP Debt Centres, Pregnancy Choice Centres, various types of chaplaincy and more.
- **Consider more specifically evangelical initiatives like Alpha** – or similar options like Long-Story Short, Christianity Explored, Why Christians Believe and 10 Day Challenge.

(3) What does this look like in practice?

(Case Studies)

Here are some colour-coded case studies from:

A - Hope Centre, Levin - Ps Tony Collis (Busy town - medium size)

B - Journey Church, Te Kuiti - Ps Terry Bradley (Rural town - medium size)

C - C3 City Church, Tauranga - Ps Alan Hood (City - larger size)

CASE STUDY A: Hope Centre, Levin

What are examples of how you connect and serve within your community?

Ps Tony replied to note three primary initiatives.

Hope Hub Food Rescue Programme

Details: Wednesday 2pm-4pm

What: Providing free food to 150 - 200 families per week.

Team: The effort has two part time paid staff and 10 volunteers.

Volume: Their 'Food Rescue' combined with their Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 'Pop Up' shops distribute more than 2 tonnes of food weekly. Some food is shared with other food providers, to help them out.

Resourcing it: People and businesses in the community contribute.



Winter Wrap

Details: Presently once a year late May

What: An event where PJ's, blankets, duvets, jerseys, scarf, clothes, hats, shoes.... are gathered and then made available for free to eager locals

Team: A team of 6 to 8 make this happen

Connection: This connects with and helps dozens of families annually to get through the winter that much warmer.



Cafe Koha

What: Shortly to be launched, a koha-based Cafe providing community and Cafe food.

When: Open Monday and Tuesday, the hope is to soon include Friday 10am-2pm

Team: Supported by volunteers from the community and Hope Centre.

Comment: The initiatives are all quite distinct

- The first is a wide-reaching regular and personal.
- The second is a wide reaching, once per year, meeting a need.
- The third utilises an existing team for a much more personal connection.



CASE STUDY B: Journey Church, Te Kuiti

What are examples of how you connect and serve within your community?

Ps Terry replied with the below two initiatives. (You'll be blown away by the second!)

Comment from Ps Terry Bradley and Ps Liz Brandon:

"...we asked ourselves the question, If we disappeared from our community, would anyone notice? This led us to take a look at who we are as a church, what we do and how that reflects the love and life of Christ to our community. This led us to even change our name to Journey. Everyone is welcome to join us on the journey. As we turned our hearts in this direction opportunities came our way to serve our community - and we said yes."

Te Kuiti Foodbank

Details: Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11am to 1pm

How: Once a food bank they supported, the opportunity to run it fell to the church in 2018.

Scale: From one fridge/freezer to now having its own large premises, a sizeable team and significant community connection.



"Number Twelve"

The scope of this one will amaze you!

Website: numbertwelve.co.nz

Beginnings: Started 2011 as a 'Social Sector Trial' reporting to Wellington, while governed locally via governmental departments by a board including the Mayor, School Principals, Senior Police and Ps Terry.

Today: Handed over as a community driven work with the sole covering of Journey Church with 8 full time staff delivering multiple Government contracts in/for the community.

The work: We provide a wrap-around service of support, information and direction serving rangatahi, their whānau and our community. The work carries a level two clearance with the Ministry of Social Development, with a number of key Government contracts (even including driver licencing alongside youth support, vocational training, employment support, the Mayor Taskforce For Jobs initiative, and more).



Comment: They've achieved truly wide-reaching community connection, inclusive of partnership, good reputation and opportunity.

- Of note, there are only two primary initiatives.
- However, there are multiple sub-initiatives in the second - though this beneficially enables paid staffing, and a myriad of opportunities to connect, love and encourage.

CASE STUDY C: C3 City Church, Tauranga

What are examples of how you connect and serve within your community?

I sat with Ps Alan Hood locally here in Tauranga to make this list.

This gives an example of a 'larger church' in a city - in contrast to the above which are in a medium town and then a comparatively small town.

Side point: Town vs city

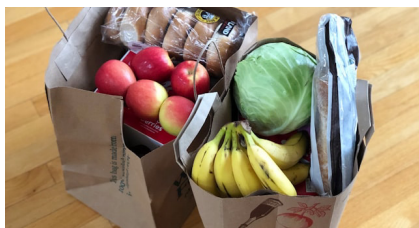
There is possibly a growing difference in NZ between the dynamics of city churches and town churches. This is worth noting - to help us understand, help and encouraging one another. The number of active Christians in many towns is falling below the 'critical mass' needed for momentum. The effect on their profile and witness is significant. The challenge for leaders is to innovate - which the above models.



Koha dinner

Details: A dinner utilising our café. Community members who couldn't afford to go out for paid dinner are invited - and local schools and similar community groups are empowered to do the inviting / giving of this opportunity.

Why not for the homeless?: We were encouraged not to do a dinner for the homeless because various churches cover this base in different ways in our city. This met a unique need, making connections, utilising our existing café and team.



CAP

Details: A debt centre, with two church members anchoring it.

Why? It met a clear need, it sets people free, and it has leveraged the expertise of some of our members.



Gifts for children in Oranga Tamariki care

Details: Church members donate financially and materially, giving NEW gifts, which are passed on via Oranga Tamariki staff / carers / social workers to children who might not otherwise receive a present.

Why: It met a need, showing kids there is something positive. It also helped the carers / social workers have a positive interaction where connection points are sometimes mostly negative.



Atrium Commercial Cafe and Conference Centre

Details: A commercial café run out of our large 'Atrium' foyer area.

Scale: About five thousand people come through the building every week.

Why: We wanted to see the community connected with our church every day. It 'demystifies' church for them. A surprising number of business and similar groups have begun using the church premises since the café started.



Scouts

Details: A church-based Scouts group – particularly well attended in the younger 'Kea' and 'Cub' age groups.

Why: A church member had a passion to start this.

Scale and nature: We've attracted a significant number of kids with developmental challenges of various kinds. Interactions with families around this have been significant and fruitful - with committed leaders suiting the work.



Shalom Kindergarten

Details: Shalom kindergarten, with its own premises attached to our church buildings, has been running for 40 years.

Why: The church recognised an opportunity to connect with and serve the community, with Christian-based education.



Light Parties

Details: Light Parties are a fun replacement for Halloween. The church filled with various games, with church members volunteering and lollies as prizes.

Why: An alternative to Halloween that attracts a few thousand. BBQ, drinks, candy floss etc... Many families come. Invitations are intentionally extended to other programmes that support families - including many of the above.



Courses supporting marriages/families

Details: Various courses are run, which are usually well attended and supported by the community. (Marriage, Menopause, GriefCare, Divorce Recovery, AA, Etc.)

Why: These have been a valuable connection point that meets real needs.



Chinese language groups / Alpha

Details: A group that meets, including Mums and children, to practice English. The Alpha Course has been one material used in the process.

Why: Initiated by members. It met a need.



mainly music

Details: Mainly Music has been run for over 20 years.

Why: An amazing connection point through which love can be shown, meeting a variety of needs (supporting mothers / care-givers)



Details: The Christmas Box is an initiative of Life Church in Auckland which we picked up on. Church members donate food items - and then help to put together about 1000 Christmas boxes, gifted by various means to community groups.

Why: While it doesn't directly bring profile to the church it helps those in the community who are struggling.

(4) How do we measure success?

(Final word)

Surely success is to do our best for God, with what we have. Agree?

To remember: One effective effort might be more valuable than five ineffective ones.
(Busyness is not the measure of success.)

“What do you think God is calling you as a church to do in service to the material and emotional needs of your community?”

Be encouraged and may we serve our communities well.