



Kia ora pastors' group convenors

These updates are sent to just one or two people per city/town.

Please review these prayerfully, then taking to your group only what you feel prompted to by God.

Every point included is about considering the 'big picture view' of gospel work in your city, as also in our nation. Beyond mutual encouragement, this is the logical subject matter of pastors' groups.

NZ Unity Stories

• Whakatane - amazing!

It was a real buzz catching up with a couple of Whakatane Church leaders and hearing their stories last week. Regular pastors group meetings, once a term combined church services for worship and prayer and also had 24-7 prayer in the 10 days leading up to Pentecost - so all the connections are in place. A Light Party for the whole community as a flagship event. Different pastors then network individually in different parts of the community, representing Christ in different spheres. Unity given some priority -representing Christ together: This is how it's done!

• Timaru - amazing!

There has been long-standing unity amongst pastors in Timaru due to some amazing longstanding pastors who've valued and preserved that culture. This past term they engaged together in 24-7 prayer for 7 days in the lead up to a combined public (outdoor) gathering in celebration of Pentecost. It was proactive. It fed vision amongst members. It set the pace!

• Invercargill - amazing! (Soaking the city in prayer)

Following discussion and prayer, with a prophetic sense God was calling them to it, 22 Invercargill churches, representing 14 different denominations, committed to 22 weeks of 'Soaking the City in Prayer'. Each church is leading the charge for one week. The recent pastors gathering had 25 different pastors present, reflecting a high level of connectedness in vision. A prayer journal and torch are passed from one church to the next on each Sunday, with a small team from the prior church visiting the next during their service to hand it over. It is about prayer and vision for the city. These churches then share reports with others from their prayer initiatives during that week. There is a lot of creativity, including prayer gatherings, prayer stations and prayer walks. A 7-day prayer guide for the occasion was created, written by 7 pastors, which members in each church use when they have the 'prayer torch'. This is a unity with hope -but also unity with legs. Churches unite on a specific day to serve their city also - with hundreds involved and over two dozen projects. (Read about their 'community service day' initiative [here](#)). Amazing!

• Auckland - amazing!

What does Church unity look like in our biggest city these days? Dale from the 'Auckland Church Network' updated recently: "Did you know that across our city there are at least 21 suburban-based pastors' networks meeting regularly? These 21 networks have more than 200 leaders participating in them. As we come together to bring flourishing to Auckland, these pastors networks are the engine room."

The Auckland Church Network cheers on the men & women who lead these networks!

Below are four sections:

(i) In the calendar

Spheres of influence (quarterly discussion guide in pursuit of strengthened city engagement)

Unison strategies (things to encourage with national/cultural change amongst ourselves as the goal)

(iv) For thought and reflection (articles - positioned under the sign-off)

Looking to all God can yet do

Dave Mann

(i) In the calendar

Term 3 - key opportunities to steward together

Looking back:

- How did any ANZAC / Mother's Day / Matariki outreach efforts go?
-

Looking forwards:

Thinking Matters - tours

In the coming months Thinking Matters tour Wes Huff, and also Michael Bird and Karl Faase, through NZ. This includes

- Christchurch,
- Auckland, Dunedin,
- Tauranga
- Wellington.

For more click [here](#).



Thinking Matters - conference "Truth Matters"

9.30am to 6pm, 27th September at C3 Church, Auckland.

Guest speakers are Luke Barnes, Wes Huff and Henare Whaanga.



Thinking and truth matter. These are privileged learning opportunities that we can value. For more on the conference - click [here](#).

Forum on the Family - 28-29 August, 2025



Clear thinking around social matters is important for Christian leaders if applications of Christian teaching (sermons) to everyday life are to be practical. Good information is a vital part of that. There is no better location for this than the 'Forum on the Family'

Speakers include:

- Dawn Hawkins (Sexual exploitation - USA)
- Jeff Johnstone (LGBT - USA)
- Dr Miriam Grossman (Trans issues - USA)
- Interview: Israel and Maria Folau
- Kirralie Smith (Paying the cost for speech - Australia)
- Amanda Achtman (Euthanasia - Canada)
- Live debate: Peter Williams, Rodney Hide, Christine Rankin. Ashley Church,

Book your tickets and travel schedules now. Click [here](#) for details.

'Jesus Clubs Tour'

>> Please value the Catalyst team when they travel

Very few travel to bring fresh vision, innovation, motivation or training to youth ministry. Travel is physically demanding.

While NZ youth ministry has declined significantly (attending about 1/4 of what it was 25 years ago), a number of things are happening that could combine to see the tide finally turned. One of these is the pioneering and energetic efforts of the Catalyst team.

- The Catalyst team are focusing on both youth and young adults.
- They carry a specific vision to see 'Jesus Clubs' started in all High Schools.
- What they are bringing for youth regarding schools is...
 - ...superb in approach and wisdom
 - ...widely recognised by various national organisational youth leaders as being needed.
- They soon embrace the personal costs of national travel again to inspire fresh vision and bring equipping to youth.

CATALYST TOUR 2025

Please help your local youth ministries connect with this.

August - Upper - Central North Island

September - Central - Lower North Island

October - South Island

Find specific dates for your town/city/region [HERE](#)

Marriage Week: Sunday 14th - Saturday 20th September, 2025



Marriage Week exists in our calendar to remind us to celebrate and also proclaim the importance of marriages within our communities. Because our wider culture is *not* valuing marriages at this time (a current cultural blind-spot), this is an area in which our churches can serve our nation - until that tide turns.

For local churches:

- Speak positively of marriage - explaining its benefits to individuals, families and societies.
- Make sure the young know about these various life-long implications and benefits.

- Encourage couples to renew marriage vows or to plan a date night.
- Promote or run a marriage seminar.
- Encourage those who are courting to engage in pre-marriage counselling, or a similar course.
- Encourage older married couples to find a way to befriend, support or bless a younger couple.

For churches together: Consider uniting annually to run and then promote a variety of different family-related courses for your community annually.

- Consider courses related to marriage, pre-marriage, parenting toddlers/children/teens, divorce recovery, grief care...
- Different churches run different courses.
- Together promote these via social media, flyers in letterboxes and local newspaper across your city or town: "Churches supporting families".
- For more on this idea read, 'Family relationships - an under-utilised gateway' [here](#).

For more on Marriage Week, go to facebook.com/marriageweeknz

Marriage / Family ministries to note

(Alphabetically listed)

While conferences exist, nothing will match the ongoing impact of local churches running courses in multiple locations nationally.

Alpha

[Course: Marriage](#) For both marriage and pre-marriage, to help couples invest in their relationships and build strong marriages.

[Parenting](#) A series of five sessions to provide practical support in parenting children or teenagers.

Family Life

[Conference: Weekend to Remember](#) is a time of enriching and renewal for married couples.

[Conference: Marriage on Mission](#) (12-13 September) Their new conference that brings a unique and powerful message to couples desiring to be used by God together in their communities.

[Event: Blended Family Couples](#) This event is for couples in blended families, focusing on understanding the unique challenges and how they impact relationships.

Focus on the Family

[Assessment: 7 Traits of Effective Parenting](#) What are your strengths as a parent? In what areas could you grow? This short research-based assessment will help you find out both.

[Video Series: Launch Into the Teen Years](#) a video-based program created to get you and your preteen talking about how to make great decisions and soar with confidence through these crucial years.

[Assessment: Marriage](#) We want marriages to be thriving and healthy. Take a free marriage assessment to identify the key areas where your marriage could use improvement and the tools that will help you strengthen your bond with your spouse.

[Articles & Resources](#) To support families and help them to grow and thrive.

Parenting Place

[Various Online Courses](#) A variety of online courses to help support parenting at different ages and through different challenges.

[Podcasts/Articles/resources](#) To inspire, equip and support thriving and connected whānau throughout Aotearoa.

Other possible courses - available internationally

[Course: Single & Parenting](#) A free 13-week video-based course which provides tips and parenting wisdom. Can be done individually or as part of a small group.

[Course/Support group: DivorceCare](#) A 13-week, video-based support group program designed to guide people on the path of recovery after separation or divorce. Can be run within your church or as part of a combined church program.

[Course/Programme: DivorceCare for Kids](#) A free 13-week program for children (ages 5–12) experiencing parental separation or divorce. Through fun activities, music, and crafts, kids learn to express their feelings, connect with their parents, and find strength in God's love. Ideal for use at home or in a church small group.

[Course/Support Group: GriefShare](#) This 13-week group offers guidance on what to expect during grief, practical coping strategies, and ongoing support. It can be run in your church or as part of a combined church program.

Other possible courses - via Rightnow Media

[Video Series & Workbook: Prepare to Parent](#) A video and workbook series consisting of four sessions to inspire and equip new parents.

[Video Series & Guide: Raising Sons of Promise](#) A Video series and free study guide for Single Mothers of Boys.

[Video Series & Guide: Visionary Parenting](#) A five-part series and a participant guide to encourage and support single parents.

Re-thinking HALLOWEEN - Could we do even better?

- It's an opportunity (31st October).
- New learning: It has TWO meanings: Our efforts can be strengthened by discovering the stories we could tell.

As a programme:



Light Parties (or similar) are the obvious connection-point and 'front end' of the opportunity. *However, what might the message be beyond providing a non-scary alternative?*

The Shining Lights Trust is challenging the 'Halloween narrative', to help churches find a fresh voice in this season. The history and thought-process outlined below is worth investigating.

New learning: *Halloween as a message*

Many will not know 'Halloween' (the name) is from a Christian festival - but it does have TWO very distinct and legitimate histories

1. **The pagan Samhain festival** - ...was held amongst the ancient Celts. They sought to appease the gods of darkness, offering sacrifices - including of humans, while seeking spiritual insight as the demons of the dark came out. However, they then embraced Christianity and the festival lost its meaning - just like Christmas has for many people today.
2. **All Hallows Day / All Saints Day** - In history, the annual celebrations continued (like Christmas does for many in NZ today) even while Christianity was embraced. The Celts then adopted the idea of using the occasion to celebrate the saints who brought the light that had replaced that prior darkness. Called 'All Hallows Day' - celebrations on 'All Hallows Eve' are where the name 'Halloween' comes from.

Both meanings are therefore true to its history - the second being the primary -*though about 20 years ago marketing money saw the opportunity for profits, creating the American-styled interest we see today* in their advertising.

Suggestion: While the name 'Halloween' is unlikely to be redeemed, the telling of *both* stories is both legitimate and interesting.

- What did the 'Saints' bring that was so great?
- Answer: *A belief system that valued human life - Genesis 1:27, leading to new integrity, new love, new prosperity, new charity, new equality, the limitation of government powers - and much more.*
- Note: The Celts of England were colonised *multiple* times (by the Romans and also various Germanic and Nordic peoples from whom the 'English' language came) *-but they chose Christianity.* It never came with a coloniser.

***In almost every way life become better because
of 'the saints who brought the light'!***

The below booklet is the BEST tool we are aware of
for SIMPLE learning on this topic.

(Created for this purpose - read the online PDF.)

HALLOWEEN - New NZ-made resources to help churches

An educational booklet for church members / giving at Light Parties - Purchase to (a) aid the educating of your members, while (b) to give parents at Light Parties, and (c) possibly also to some of those 'trick or treating'.

- Intentionally gentle.
- Does not include the gospel - but does contrast the choice between light with darkness.
- View PDF online and purchase [HERE](#)



Education: 1min videos for in-service church use and learning++ - soon to be added, to the 'A minute in history' audios *and 1min videos* suit use in your social media and showing to your members.

- **For 1min audios:** Click the "Halloween" tab at HopeProject.co.nz/A-Minute-In-History
- **1min videos:** These will be uploaded to the same link by September. This will be a useful educational tool, re-framing the existing audios with non-church audiences in mind.

3. As a blog - AllTogether.co.nz/Halloween

4. For your programming: Run a Light party - For ideas, talk to someone running one.

- We note C3 City Church Tauranga, Whakatane churches as a united effort - contact any pastor, Alexandra Baptist, Hastings via Peak Vision Church, Crossroads Presbyterian (North Waikato), CityWest Church (NP), Manukau City Baptist, Whitianga Baptist, NorthCross Church (Auckland).
- Many others will also. Some are combined church efforts.
- Call someone you know.

How do we then tell the stories of history as storytellers - without need for 'preaching' - *revealing to our nation the clear distinction that exists between light and darkness - just as our Celtic ancestors also at one time discovered?*

Looking forwards: Christmas floats

- In most locations there will someone in a local church who would LOVE to imagine and construct a float each year if asked. How could you find and empower that person?

(ii) Spheres of influence

Quarterly discussion guide

The suggestion here is that pastors' groups embrace the habit of a 10 to 15 minute discussion every third month, considering just 2 spheres of influence and an upcoming cultural season each time. It's a simple and practical idea.

The question:

What are our churches and people doing in this area in our city?

The purpose and benefits:

New awareness. City perspective. Collaboration. Wider promotion and utilisation.

Encouraged vision. Expanded initiative.

Encouragement and awareness re opportunities within 8 'spheres' of society and half a dozen cultural seasons is therefore enabled annually.

TERM THREE FOCUS AREAS:

1. The agricultural, farming and business sectors

- Seasonally, spring represents the beginning of the agricultural season, and also of the start of the primary sales season for many businesses. How are churches and their people engaged here?
- (In Tauranga/Te Puke there is an annual 'Kiwifruit Harvest Prayer Breakfast' that both celebrates and prays for the harvest, noting its significance to the local economy. Orchardists, workers, council members, politicians and church leaders are all invited.)

2. Family - noting National Marriage Week is in Term 3...

- What community initiatives do churches or their members provide in your city/town in support of families, marriage, parenting, for those suffering a divorce, for those suffering grief, etc.?

Hearing from each other will encourage, potentially enhance collaboration, and likely inspire fresh initiative also. Perspectives and thinking will be helped to see the city -shaping the manner of engagement.

(iii) 'In unison' strategies

(Things to encourage in view of wider vision)

The greatest efficiencies in Christian unity are by way of common goals rather than uniformity in methodologies / common programmes - even while both have value.

We commonly neglect united goals in favour of more-tangible programmes.

Ideas we could embrace in common to make a difference

This article lists 4 goal areas, with 14 applications which each church could do their own way — yet that could make a broad impact in our nation if these were to become the habits of 1500 churches.

An example: For an idea introduced just last year, what if all NZ churches united in the goal of seeing a prayer meeting started in connection with every school and workplace -through the unity of Christian believers in that place? With reminders via the pastors' group, if pastors were to mention this vision as an application point in sermons a few times each year, what outcomes might this catalyse?

The simplest ideas are sometimes the most effective.

Via the above image - 14 similar ideas can be found. (A 40min message recorded 2019 from Dave M titled 'Cultural change and what a united Church could do' speaks to this principle, and can be listened to via YouTube [here](#).)

Application:

When facilitating your local pastors' groups meeting, what 'common goals' could you breathe life into by way of your passing encouragements and comments?

For this months 'articles', please find below

- A unity message from Peter McHugh in Australia
- 'The Quiet Revival' - A link to significant UK data.
- An Australian report on the same trend revealing 700,000 new people identifying as 'Christians' in the census - despite the total Christian affiliation still dropping.
- AI: Challenges, economic turmoil and opportunity. (A brief note to inspire hope.)

The next update will be sent prior to the start of Term 4.

Looking to all God can yet do

Dave Mann

(Director - Shining Lights Trust)

AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups

(iv) For thought and refection - related to unity

Resource:

Peter McHugh - ENGAGE Conference, Newcastle 2025

What is it to be one?

"Recorded live at the ENGAGE Conference 2025, Peter McHugh shares a timely and prophetic message to the Church—calling us to oneness, deeper love, and courageous faith in action. With the wisdom of a seasoned leader, he unpacks how we can embody the heart of Jesus in our communities and live out the kind of love that transforms lives.

Across both sessions, Peter invites us to reimagine what it means to follow Jesus together—for the sake of our cities and the world."



Watch the sessions below:

1. <https://vimeo.com/1069101653>
2. <https://vimeo.com/1069112225>

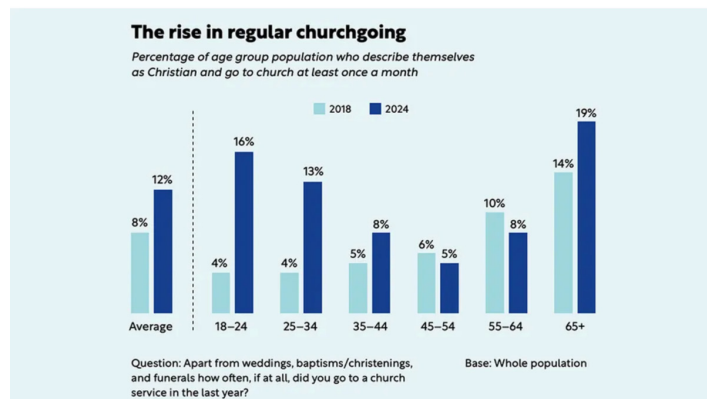
Cultural awareness:

The Quiet Revival

A survey from Bible Society UK

Church attendance is increasing in the UK. The same is happening in the US. It seems reflective of a culture-wide 'turn of the tide' in Western Civilisation.

>> Access the original UK survey via the image.



Cultural awareness:

An Australian report and data saying the same

This encouraging article is worth pausing to read. While 'Christian affiliation' in the Australian census is declining, it is of note that more than 784,000 new people ticked the box 'Christian' in the past five year.

The pace of stories reflecting this trend from across Australia is increasing. The article shares some of these - akin to how many Muslims turn toward Christ through dreams.



Question: Might this be a season in which church leaders are wise to adjust, or maybe even to intentionally strengthen some areas in view of societal change? What about gospel focus? What about a culture of relationally mentoring non-believers (outreach) as also believers (discipleship)? What do the pastors of your city/town think?

>> Access the Australian article via the image.

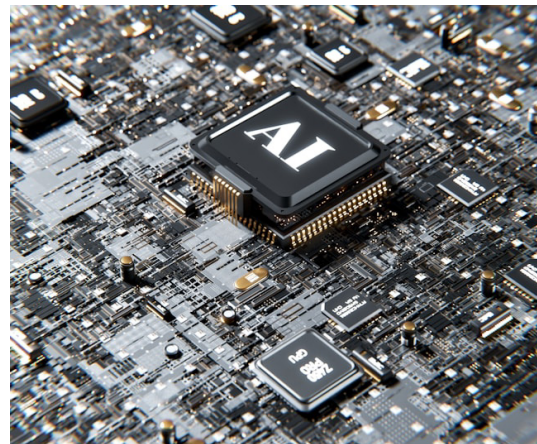
Cultural awareness:

AI: Challenges, economic turmoil - and opportunity

The 90 second video illustrates the present ability of AI to mimic a human. AI will get much better than this.

Challenges are unavoidably ahead:

Many jobs will be lost in the next 5 to 10 years. Some Industries will be radically changed. Fraud is already increasing exponentially.



Positively - people will crave what is authentic and real. Offence will increasingly be felt by anything that is fake. People won't want an AI talking to them. Even a fake TV ad will begin to 'offend'. People will crave authenticity. Production values won't matter in contrast to something being real.

For our churches: This can work well for the gospel because we offer a real message and a real hope, represented by real people - who also offer real connection and relationship!

Question: How might we adjust our approaches or promotion, in view of these trends and the opportunities they might bring for us? What do the pastors of your city/town think?
