



Kia ora pastors' group convenors

Here is the Term 2 quarterly update – sent to only one or two people from each geographic city/town to feed vision for unity.

Please take time to consider this update,
we suggest taking notes as you go, with your three upcoming (Term 2) pastors' group meetings in mind.

FIVE sections below are:

- 1. Recent unity stories**
- 2. For the calendar**
- 3. Discipling Kingdom thinking in local church leaders on an ongoing basis (A simple quarterly conversation to have)**
- 4. In unison unity (A reminder that your 'by the way' encouragements matter)**
- 5. UNITY updates and articles**

While the 3 stories are encouraging

...but please to not get 'lost in them' to the detriment of the treasures below.

Looking to all God can yet do

Dave Mann

1. Recent unity stories in NZ

Here are three stories from the 'Active Church unity (Mahi Ngātahi)' FaceBook page.

Amazing Napier

Unity making serving the city SIMPLE



At a combined church service on Sunday 22nd March, the culture of unity among Napier churches was stunningly reflected. Being well connected is a part of their culture. Years of diligence in these foundations has paid off.

With the 'Hope Project' prayer walk and booklet delivery to coordinate,

they made this a focus in their existing regular combined worship and prayer service.

Attended by about 400, beyond worship, stories were shared showing the purpose and results of the nationwide gospel effort, followed by combined prayer for their city.

With delivery / prayer walk map areas then sitting waiting - God's people were invited to take delivery areas near them. Some stood in line for as long as 45 minutes after the service waiting. Seeing the importance of this effort - even while but a small part of all that local churches do, these amazing Jesus-lovers of Napier lined up - *and ALL areas taken in the one evening.*

The ease of their city-wide effort has to be noted - an evidence of their success in building a culture of trust and collaboration, centred around a vision for their city that is proactive and outwardly looking. They are united to do together what they cannot do apart.

City-wide coordination. One evening and simple. Amazing!

(These next two stories have length. Again, please do not miss the content of this Term 2 update below.)

Amazing Waimate

An unequalled community Christmas event and community favour



For 21 years now Waimate churches have run a "Christmas in the Square" event, from 200 attending the first to over 3000 annually now. It's an event that blesses - while achieving remarkable community connection, trust and favour.

While wide in appeal, Jesus' story has always remained prominent in their event. It isn't churches 'seeking approval, as-if ashamed of the hope they carry. A nativity tent explains the story. It is run by a team dressed in costumes, and this is more popular than the Santa grotto. A young girl expresses her joy at getting her simple Christmas story booklet 'from the Jesus people' - with about 200 to 300 given out annually. But nothing is pushed. It's invitational.

A Mary and Joseph walk the crowd with a donkey telling their story. As an example, the first time they did this a non-church couple took the role, she actually being pregnant and he middle-Eastern in his looks. They delighted in telling the Christmas story again and again.

The community partnership is a most noteworthy dynamic. There are grants and sponsorship from the Council, businesses and community groups. These cover costs enabling a free event for 3000 people! There is local entertainment ranging from preschools, to school video presentations and youth bands, a Filipino group, and various talented individual performers. In addition there are free activities and games that families can enjoy together.

Regarding food, Rotary put on a free sausage sizzle, young farmers cook free chips, and a church puts on free drinks. The Whitehorse Lions provide 900 candles for the Carols by candlelight, while the Glenavy volunteer fire brigade helps with security and hands out the candles - while Christmas cake is also handed out to the entire crowd.

It is a true community event - organised by God's Church!

For a final couple of other details - the Carols by Candlelight, led by local performers, is a highlight. The whole community sings loudly - with the amazing lyrics of our Carols echoing throughout the community. Then, before the fireworks, a lone piper plays Amazing Grace. The event then finishes with pastor John Begg - an instigator of the event - thanking the crowd and praying a blessing on the community.

The event is a community highlight - and "the best event we go to" according to various food carts, because of the community spirit.

The churches then also put on a Christmas lunch for the community - as an extension of a WEEKLY community meal they facilitate.

What is achieved? From a church perspective, there is favour and connection gained right across the community. This is called 'presence', and it precedes conversation. They are present - seen - known - trusted - and of good reputation.

Well done Waimate churches on this 20 year legacy. You are role models to us!

(For a range of photos, search "Waimate Christmas in the Square" on FaceBook. For ongoing stories like this of churches being active together, follow the "Active church unity (Mahi Ngātahi)" FaceBook page.

Amazing Oamaru

A story of growth - and of local church unity



Is the 'quiet revival' here? Ps Brendon's story suggests so. With 15 years in Oamaru, baptisms are increasing. They recently grew from few to nearly 30 young adults. The near-empty creshe room they prayed over is now struggling to fit the babies - with new babies (10 and counting) soon expected.

New people are coming to faith. A recent Alpha course expected 25 at its start, but was attended by 75 at its peak.

At the core, **PRAYER is the first dynamic**. There is a pastors prayer meeting online 5am Monday to Friday, and an on-site prayer gathering 7am on Wednesday and Thursday weekly, and also a Tuesday evening prayer gathering - and five more.

But there is also **an incoming GOSPEL TIDE connecting with an AUTHENTIC GOSPEL DNA**. A short talk with Brendon, and you quickly pick this up. His Hindu grandparents in South Africa had their own idols and temple in their backyard. A pastor felt led to randomly visit to pray for his sick grandmother. Miraculously healed, they gave their lives to Jesus, and his grandad then smashed the idols. He then preached salvation through Jesus to those turning up to worship at the temple - resulting in 3 churches that they know of starting as a result. His grandfather then started a habit of boldly going out to pray for the sick to introduce them to Jesus followed - sometimes taking him along. The GOSPEL is being preached.

However, **UNITY is the other dynamic**. The pastors have relationships, creating trust. With pastors' knowing each other, members are changing churches less - while when they do, pastors check in with each other about it. There is no 'sheep stealing', but instead trust. Their unity has also lessened the ability of some to gossip or criticise others. Together, the church leaders protect against division. As a result members are freely encouraged to go and support events run in or by other churches - where this can be of benefit to them, or to their outreach to the community.

A unity story: At a combined church service recently, 12 churches participated. It was held on a Sunday morning in a neutral location (a local school), with 500 attending. Daz Chettle of Christchurch spoke, with both a morning and evening service.

A salvation story: A young lady came to faith in that service. Brendon's wife chatted with her. When baptised - she came up out of the water singing in tongues. A week later (before going overseas with her work) she shared her testimony on the morning of her baptism and sang a waiata. A man who'd been visiting the church for a few weeks was so touched he gave his life to Christ there and then.

(As a side note: Is every church growing? No. However, maybe 3 or 4 measurably are. This is a separate topic, but also a worthy consideration. If there really is an incoming gospel tide in our nation currently, what distinguishes a church capitalising on its 'walk ins' / new interest, in contrast to one that somehow does not?)

There is plenty to be encouraged by here.

Well done Oamaru churches on your unity in and for the gospel in your community.

(Please now view the update below, taking notes of anything relevant to your next term of pastors' group meetings)

2. For the calendar: Vision and planning

Here are some key dates and tips - with Term 2 in view.

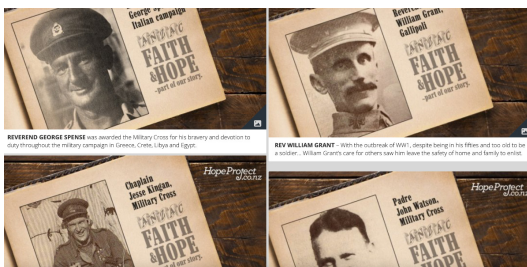
Catch up first...

Prayer

- If not already discussed in March, how did various combined prayer gatherings in Term 1 go?

Easter

- How did your city wide prayer walk and Hope Project booklet delivery go?
- How did Easter services, Hope Project, and other outreaching efforts go?
- Did efforts to equip and encourage members to engage conversations / extend invitations bear fruit?



Coming up

APRIL: ANZAC (Saturday 25th April, 2025)

Many churches enjoy opportunities to be involved with public ceremonies in this season. These need stewarding well.

If useful, some stories of chaplains in the wars can be found via the image. The movie 'Hacksaw Ridge' is a great reference point for a story.

May: This is 'GO Day' internationally

Timed for Pentecost, tens of millions, from over 160 nations unite to pray - and then to do something to reach out with the gospel.



- GO Train (Train your people late-April / early-May)
- GO Pray (Start of May)
- GO Month (A month of focus - May)
- GO Day (Timed for Pentecost - Sunday 24th May, 2026)

"If everyone can reach someone, together we can reach the world."

gomovement.world

May: Youth Prayer Day - Sunday 24 May

NZ's denominational youth reps + the leaders of 10 youth outreach organisations have [united](#) to initiate an annual youth prayer day.

The simple request is that all churches pause for just 5 minutes, specifically to pray for our nation's young people in Sunday church services on that day.

- There are many social challenges.
- These are also spiritual challenges.
- NZ church youth ministry declined. We want to see that turned around!

Action points:

- **For Sunday services on 24 May** - Please note the date - to give 5 minutes to praying for NZ youth.
- **For youth groups** - national youth leaders will be communicating directly, encouraging youth groups to give focused time to prayer together.
- **For flyers / graphics** - inc a powerpoint for a youth prayer time - downloaded [here](#).



May: Pentecost Prayer Initiative

24-7 Prayer NZ invites churches together to consider uniting for **10 days of prayer in the lead up to Pentecost Sunday.**

There are three ways you could engage:

1. Individual churches can pray for 24 hours, setting up a prayer room at any point during the ten days.
 2. Some churches might be large enough to cover the full ten days with continuous prayer
 3. Your churches could partner in your city or region to cover the ten days with continuous prayer.
- You might create one centralised prayer room.
 - You might create multiple prayer room locations.

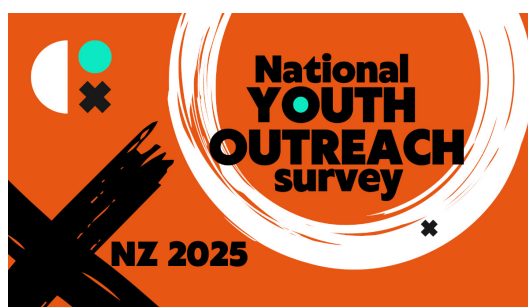
This is about gathering in unity together to seek God.

For more see: 24-7prayer.nz/pentecost-prayer



12pm 28 May: Invitation -Report on a way forward for youth outreach

A presentation of data coming from a national youth outreach survey will be presented in a 1-hour online presentation, 12pm Thursday 28th May on zoom - link [HERE](#)



Purpose: An intentional initiative purposed to reveal the current reality of youth ministry attendance and also of 4 identifiable outreaching gaps, to make clear how the situation might be changed.

By who: The study resulted from [intentional discussions](#) among NZ's denominational youth reps and the leaders of 10 youth outreach organisations. The research was undertaken by the Shining Lights Trust on behalf of the group, and with their help. Youth leaders were surveyed online. An additional 100 phone interviews were then made to key youth leaders, each representing a different geography of our nation.

This is a strategic presentation, revealing areas of change that could catalyse new results.

Please note the date, to eat your lunch while listening in, 12pm Thursday 28th May.

(A written report will be made available afterwards at ChristianYouthUnity.nz)



June: Matariki - Friday 10th July

Why do we have public holiday? All of our public holidays exist because their stories in history are in some way relevant to who we are as a people and nation.

The holidays are a platform for that storytelling, so we never forget.

Why this new public festival - Matariki? Matariki recently became a public holiday with recognition to the period during which the Treaty was betrayed, during which things-Māori were unjustly disregarded. The inclusion of this festival brings a small piece of balance to how things could have been.

>> In some senses, this is now also story - beyond only its historic meaning <<

In history: At the simplest level, Matariki was the new year celebration - held in midwinter, between harvests, as is the pattern globally. (Our January 1st new-year timing came from mid-winter in the northern hemisphere).

How could this be an opportunity? Beyond the point made above (about why this became a festival), as a new year festival there can be thematic thoughts of fresh vision and hope. There are ways to 'lean in'. Read a summary, collating various contributions, [here](#).

What about idolatry? There is a presently a trend of increased focus on pre-European Māori spiritualities. Intriguingly, data doesn't all align. 7.9% of Māori claimed this belief in the 2013 census; while only 6.4% in 2023. The focus on this is, to some extent, an agenda as reflected in the public media and education. The interest is being fed. Of note, the same 2023 census showed 24% of Māori identifying as Christian (though that was down from 39.5% in 2013). Were public focus to authentically reflect spiritual beliefs held by Māori, Christianity would still be the more relevant public expression.

As Christians, clearly we do not participate with idolatry. However, we are unwise to fully withdraw becomes some do. The significance of Christianity among and for our Māori will only be known about (as also the same stories from among our European ancestors) if we pay attention to this history, and then stand to tell the stories. Matariki is an appropriate platform for this discussion.



Thinking Matters: "No Rivals" (National Conference)

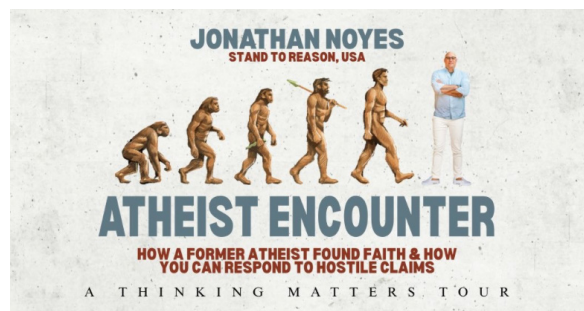
Saturday 5th August, at C3 Ellerslie
Church, Auckland.

This will be **followed by a conference specifically for students**, hosted Saturday 12 September at Grace Vineyard Church, Christchurch Find details [here](#).

Thinking Matters: Atheist Encounter Tour

Among various speakers at various dates nationally, this tour is of note - in

- Te Awamutu (May 14)
- Hamilton (May 15)
- Tauranga (May 17)
- Wellington (May 19)
- Christchurch (May 20)
- Dunedin (May 21)
- Southland/Wyndham (May 22)
- Auckland (May 24).



For more on Thinking Matters' events. click [here](#).

For a wider scope of resources and WHY this is included in a pastors' group convenors update

With about 85% of those who come to faith doing so before age 20, the strengthening of children's and youth ministry is a logical primary area of focus for all church leaders together.

While it is often noted that about two-thirds of youth leave the faith in their young adult years, the process to note is that most of these left the faith mentally **during their youth years.**

he point is that greater priority to teaching children, intermediates and youth

not only what the Bible says **but also why we might believe it to be true**

, is of high strategic significance to the united Church.

Leaders lead!

For a wider scope of resources note the [Thinking Matters](#) NZ website and also the NZ-made '[Why Christian believe](#)' small group series - among a wider myriad of international online resources. [Alpha](#) and [Long Story Short](#) courses are notable for their inclusion of 'reasons for faith' in a simple manner within their content.

Other things for the calendar

- **National youth outreach survey report** - as noted above, 12pm Thursday 28th May at [HERE](#).
 - **The Aotearoa New Zealand Evangelistic Research Association** - a gathering to hear vision and proposals for increased evangelistic effect - 15-16 June, Auckland. [HERE](#)
 - **New Zealand Christian Leaders' Congress - 17-18 November, Wellington** to hear one another - NZChristiannetwork.org.nz
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3. Discipling Kingdom thinking in local church leaders on an ongoing basis

How could a greater level of 'Kingdom thinking' be built among your city or town's church leaders?

>> A simple quarterly 'discovery discussion' within pastors' groups is a simple and sensible answer to that question.

The suggestion is that you initiate a relaxed and selfless discussion once per quarter, in which you invite all present to briefly highlight anything they or their members are doing

...in two spheres of influence in the city (thereby covering all 8 'spheres' each year)
...or in connection to any upcoming public festivals.

The question: To facilitate this easy, relaxed, selfless, enjoyable, affirming, vision-building conversations there is just one question.

- 1. What are churches and their members doing in service to our city in these two spheres and this noted upcoming seasons?**
- 2. Then pray blessing on each church / initiative / person when shared.**

Results: This will generate 'sight of the city' beyond the interests of only our own individual churches. This can be powerful, while the 'mechanism' could not be simpler or more friendly.

To resource you: A simple guide (2 spheres and an upcoming season) is included in each of these quarterly updates.

TERM 2: Discussion guide

(20 minutes - invite contributions - pray for each initiative.)

1. Local and national government - What are churches and their people doing within this arena? Identify, applaud and pray blessing on all efforts.

2. Recreational and sporting activities and clubs - Many sporting activities kick off for winter in Term 2. What are churches and their people doing within this arena? Note Chaplaincy here - including Sports Chaplaincy, Hospital Chaplaincy, United Seafarers Mission (base in each NZ port), Prison Chaplaincy, rest-home chaplaincy and more. Note also clubs like [BB/Icons](#), [Girls Brigade](#), [Girls and Boys Rally](#) - or after school programmes, craft clubs, men's 'sheds' - and more.

Who are the key people? What are the community's needs? Pray blessing on them all.

3. Coming seasons: ANZAC (25 April), Kings Birthday (1 June), Mother's day (10 May), Matariki (10 July).

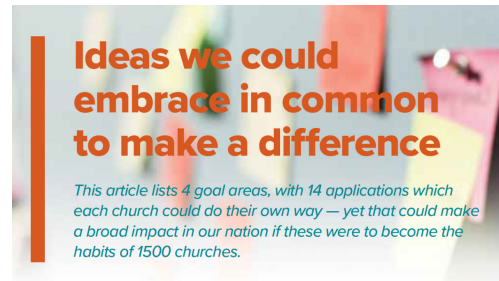
May we function 'as one' within each city and town for the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

4. 'In unison' unity

Unity and results through shared goals, not shared methods

Small encouragements, mentioned 'in passing' to church leaders, can have an effect.

A culture of unity in simple and sensible goals can yield more results than busyness in various united activities. Thoughts noted here are worthy of consideration by those facilitating unity among church leaders.



- **For example:** No matter how many outreach programmes we run, if church members are not equipped to engage others in everyday spiritual conversations, the sum-total of all Church outreach will remain weak. What if you were to consistently encourage this 'in passing' when pastors gather?
- **Or to consider Term 1's example** - of members encouraged to unite with other Christians in their workplace or school, to pray about what they could do - what effect might this go on to have for your city? (Read more [here.](#))
- (14 similar examples can be found in an article [here.](#))

What we can SEE as unity facilitators matters because our thinking shapes our behaviour, which determines our results.

For articles this Term - please see below:

- 'City to City' - New Zealand launch
- Hope Project Christmas - online NZ public campaign data
- JWs attract 20,000. Could we, and does it matter?

The next update, for Term 3, will be sent in July.

We pray this is useful for direction, resource, hope and vision

Dave Mann

(Director - Shining Lights Trust)

AllTogether.co.nz/pastorgroups

5. UNITY updates and articles

New resourcing and leadership inspiration work

'City to City' - New Zealand Launch

City to City is a support ministry to church health and outreach -originating from Tim Keller - now with a New Zealand base of operation also.



Its three primary focus areas - serving churches and churches together - are:

- **Church planting** - encouraging innovation where populations are growing with few churches.
- **Renewal** - of existing churches.
- **'Movement'** - encouraging church unity.

Their hope is to serve, bless and encourage - not to lead. They can bring perspective, learning, ideas and encouragement in their areas of expertise to help our churches, and churches together, do better.

For more, see their website [here](#).

Public engagement

Hope Project Christmas - online NZ public campaign data

With the Easter Hope Project effort just behind us -here is some simple reporting on the public-facing social media component of this.



'Out of sight means out of mind!'

This is about helping Christ be seen within Christmas. It has a cultural effect. New awareness catalyses new thinking.

The data reflects the spiritual interest of the wider public. View [here](#).

Topical article from the SLT
**JWs attract 20,000.
Could we, and does it matter?**

**Auckland hotels near capacity as
Jehovah's Witness convention opens**



Samuel Sherry
Journalist - NZ Herald - 8 Jan, 2026 07:00 PM © 2 mins to read

Was the wider NZ Church just 'shown up'? What's our measure for success? Should we have bigger events - or might there be other measure of success be more important?

Read a brief reflection that recognises their achievement - while also noting why Christians should be holding their heads high even without a 20,000 attendee event - [here](#).

Want *ongoing* encouragement to your **THINKING** about unity?

The "**Active Church Unity (Mahi Ngātahi)**" FaceBook page

shares two posts weekly related to church unity across New Zealand including

- stories from NZ pastors' groups
- current happenings / news relevant to church unity
- innovations relevant to pastors' groups.

Search in FaceBook and join the group.

Other links / resources

Pastors' groups encouragement page - from the SLT: [HERE](#)

SLT articles relevant to NZ church unity and pastors' groups: [HERE](#)

SLT Messages / Q&A related to pastors' groups: [HERE](#)

'City by City' FB page for city pastors' groups: [HERE](#)

'City to City' NZ webpage - [HERE](#)

Free NZ book on unity: Download Dave's book 'In One Spirit' - pdf - [HERE](#)

Free NZ book on unity: Download Colin Shaw's book 'A House for His Glory' - pdf - [HERE](#)
