Kia ora pastors' group convenors

Here is the Term 4 update, to aid vision and momentum in the unity of churches in our cities and towns, while also together nationally.

- As a reminder, this is sent to just one or two people from each city/town pastors' group. We can easily add others upon request from you.

Leadership is significantly about vision. We encourage pausing to consider what is in these quarterly newsletters.

FIVE sections below are:

1. **Unity stories**
2. **In the calendar**
3. **Term 4 quarterly discussion guide**
4. **"In unison" unity reminder**
5. **Articles -** for learning and encouragement

Looking to all God can yet do

Dave Mann

1. Unity stories

Here are some 'pastors group' stories from 3 of our nation's rural towns.

Amazing Marton!

In a town of only 5000, there are half a dozen churches and only three part-time staff amongst them. The demographics can be challenging – and yet through their unity more is happening than one might think!

- **Gathering:** Church leaders meet on the last Thursday of every month for relationship and prayer. They also run FIVE well-attended combined services annually – which are held on a Sunday mornings – a reflection of their unity.
- **Community connection:** Various combined efforts then come about because the churches aren't competing, and they are a team. They run stalls at community markets, they participate in the annual Christmas parade, they run an outside carol event together for the community. No individual church could do these things, yet together with their resources and skills combined they can. *Together, they ensure all community-facing efforts thrive.*
- **Regarding youth:** A blessing is that there is one part-time paid youth leader running a youth group for the community, hosted at the Presbyterian church. And regarding the future, with two High Schools in the community (Rangatīkei College plus an Anglican Girls private college), their hope and prayer is that God will yet bring more young people to faith there, with youth with faith uniting to bring an even more visible hope-filled presence there, to see a tide turned.

Well done Marton churches. In your unity you are a voice. May the Lord continue to raise up good people among you to engage with love and hope in the various spheres of your community.

Original article at the 'Active Church Unity (Mahi Ngātahi)' Facebook group.

Amazing Whitianga!

While smaller communities are easily beyond the 'radar' of those living in our regional cities, church leaders are often highly connected within them.

This is the case In Whitianga, located in the upper Coromandel Peninsula.

- **Combined services:** Churches unite for combined services every 5th Sunday.
- **Combined prayer:** Churches also unite for a combined church prayer gathering on the first Thursday of month prayer.
- **Monthly pastors' gatherings:** Even while most pastors are only part-time employed (only one is full time), they still meet regularly - monthly being the target. Their church community includes the Anglicans, AOG, C3, Crossroads, Baptist, Elim - and possibly more. It is noted how the different churches really enjoy the different styles of worship their combined church services expose them to.

- **The gospel to homes:** Hope Project as a 'staple' is easily achieved. The concurrently catalysing of prayer along streets, for each home in this community which they love, is also valued.
- **Representative involvements:** Church leaders are individually engaged in various other ways in the community - from chaplaincy to ANZAC services and more.
- **The success of each others' events:** Open communication means that different key events hosted by individual churches can be supported by others.
- **Youth:** Regarding youth, there is a considerable level of teamwork and trust among the churches, often combining to see a critical mass coming together for momentum in youth ministry.
    - **Youth united in school:** The community also has a high school - where youth unite just like the pastors do, to be stronger in their witness together. (Most younger ones then leave town at age 18.)

Well done Whitianga pastors. You are a cheerful bunch - full of faith and positivity - acceptance, love and generosity - always pleasant and fun to be around! Keep shining for your community, for you know that what you do matters!

Original article at the Active Church Unity (Mahi Ngātahi)' Facebook group.

Amazing Huntly!

The vibrant 'unity life' of so many of our towns is to be applauded.

- **Pastors gather:** Huntly's pastors' gatherings are enjoyed. There is a strength of relationship and trust among them – even while some are in voluntary roles. Several prayer gatherings were also arranged this year where needs were shared and prayer offered for each other, the town and the nation.
- **Combined worship and prayer:** Right now a combined worship evening is being planned for November at Lakeside Community Church.
- **Unity in special events:** At times like Christmas and Easter,. churches commonly unite to be a voice together in praise to God and witness to their community. This past Easter the churches gathered to walk with a cross on Good Friday from the Baptist, through Huntly West, over the bridge and down the main street, for worship together at the Anglican. Children excitedly took turns carrying the cross. The service was overflowing with a wide range of people attending. A similar combined service is planned for Christmas eve.
- **The gospel to homes -** all the churches united together to distribute the Hope Project booklets to their allocated areas, praying blessing over every home as they went.
- **God is drawing people:** A pattern of 'walk ins' into the various churches are also happening in Huntly like in other parts of the nation. There is a feeling that the community has a heightened awareness of spiritual things. One commented regarding funerals that they've sensed an increased openness to spiritual things and a softening in conversations.

- **A story:** As one example, a church leader was invited to pray in a local home where the parents felt something was wrong spiritually. Giving them a call, the householder asked what they'd do - maybe expecting something like in the horror movies. They were relieved by the relational approach taken, with simple and gentle prayers through the house. The family went on to report how things had changed in the house afterwards, while a connection to yet another family was established.

Well done Huntly churches and your leaders. Your unity, faith, love and valiant efforts with limited resources speak to your community. We pray every blessing upon your ongoing work and witness for the Lord.

Original article at the Active Church Unity (Mahi Ngātahi)' Facebook group.

2. In the calendar

Looking back:

- How did Marriage Week go?
- What are we each doing to support marriages in our churches and community?

Looking forwards:

Marriage and Parenting Support From Alpha NZ

Alpha NZ are doing a Term 4 focus on catalysing the running of the Alpha Marriage Course and Alpha Pre-Marriage Course in local churches.

To run a course – contact the Alpha team for basic training – after which the opportunity is yours!

The promotional pack includes promo videos, social media images, banners, posters, logo, course videos, leaders guides.

Find out more here

Halloween – 31st October

Note: An opportunity to discover in greater measure

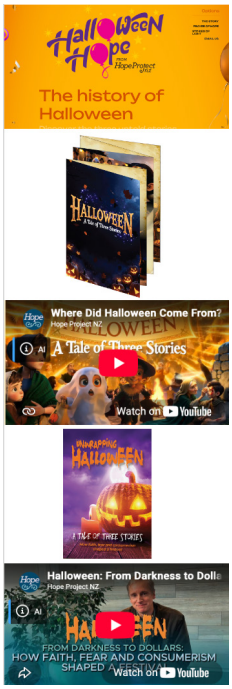
Named after a Christian festival – an understanding of the history of Halloween can help churches and believers find a voice for storytelling. This can be well received.

Already existing: Light Parties: These (or similar) are a great opportunity to connect - with games, intentional storytelling, and intentional invitation to other church programmes included. Ideas for games are easy found by contacting any church that has done this before.

- *Consider: C3 City Church Tauranga, Whakatane churches as a united effort, Alexandra Baptist, Hastings via Peak Vision Church, Crossroads Presbyterian – North Waikato, CityWest Church – NP, Manukau City Baptist, Whitianga Baptist, and NorthCross – North Shore Auckland.)*

New: Here are FIVE new resources *to help churches find their storytelling voice* in this season

The goal is positive witness. A clear opportunity for storytelling exists for God's people *once they know the history.*



The message: "Light is better than darkness – and our ancestors agreed!"

The origins of 'Hallow-een' is All Hallows Day-Eve (a Christian festival) – even while we all know it has been turned into a commercial occasion today.

- **Public website:** HalloweenHope.nz
- **Children's 'fold out poem'**
- **2min video animation for children**
- **Booklet for teens / adults**
- **3.30min history video for adults**

All of the above - including a possible communication outline - can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/halloween

Jesus brought light to our ancestors. May his story be told and known!

NZ Christian Congress - 16-17 November

A unique unity & connection event hosted by NZCN every third year

"Congress" is a gathering at which leaders from many different New Zealand churches, movements, organisations, cultures, and places can come together to consider their shared vision, goals and mission.

This year its hosted in Wellington at 'The Street Church' (9 Hania Street, Central Wellington). The two-day conference gives platform to a wide range of Christian leaders to share what they see in our nation right now.

Find details and register at nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/2026-congress/

Christmas - Friday 25th December

A growing need for us to engage

There is a wider message our churches could consider and tell – enhancing our witness. As a cultural festival – with public holiday attached – Christmas is purposed to remind all New Zealanders of the significance of Christianity to who we are. *But few have ever considered this – and almost none currently discuss it.*

- **For Christians** – it is naturally "a Christian celebration". Without thought, we naturally lean into this.
- **For the public** – it is instead a cultural festival, existing for the important storytelling that explains how we came to have our amazing cultural values and the blessings they have brought to us all. However, if this is not discussed, the cultural meaning is lost – and this is the case presently.

This gives our churches TWO distinct audiences to consider, with two directions for communication - *not just ONE!*

- We celebrate the Christ of Christmas
- *We then tell stories explaining the relevance of the CHRIST in CHRISTmas to the public -through public nativities, public carols and a wide array of public storytelling.*

Who is Jesus to all New Zealanders?

Storytelling is the bridge – because his significance is in his INFLUENCE, and this is what the public festival is most-logically about! So, beyond the logical stories of Jesus, Ruatara (the first NZ Christmas) and Saint Nicholas (the origin of the Santa tradition reinforcing Christian charity) – *consider then how we came to have our cultural freedoms, prosperity, equality and charity*.

Through this lens, "**Jesus** is for celebrating by all New Zealanders" – just as **Waitangi Day** is also for us all – and **Labour Day** (40 hour work week) for us all – and **ANZAC**. ***Public festivals are about remembering the key things in our history that explain who we are! There is an open doorway here for a fresh and compelling connection.***

Resourcing for public engagement:

"Hope Project Christmas" is a coordinated collation and promotion of resources and ideas to help churches and individuals help CHRIST be seen across their wider communities at CHRISTmas again.

This wide array of collated ideas and resources can be found at
AllTogether.co.nz/Christmas

Take the ideas that will work for you!

For awareness: 'Hope Project' also then engages in a representative manner, funding a social media campaign purposed to keep Christ visible to public audiences online also. The 2025 campaign achieved - 6.8m media connections & 25,083 content interactions

Events happening early in 2027 - to note for preparations

- **Waitangi Day** - What are your opportunities?
- **Hope Project** - with no booklet delivery in 2027 (booklet every second year), no coordination for a prayer walk / delivery is needed
- **Pray For Your Schools Day** - Wednesday 17th February - A new united initiative backed by NZs denominational youth reps + 9 national youth outreach organisations together. ChristianYouthUnity.nz
- **Combined church prayer gatherings.**

3. Term 4 Discussion Guide

An encouragement to have a SPECIFIC DISCUSSION together every quarter - for a reason!

The suggestion is of a quarterly discussion - as a habit - for 10 to 15 minutes each quarter -covering upcoming seasons and just 2 spheres of influence (thereby covering all 8 spheres within each given year).

Why? Your local pastors can't serve what they can't see.

The question to ask: What are our churches and their people doing in this area in our city? **The result:** New awareness. City perspective. Bigger vision. Collaboration. Wider promotion and utilisation. Expanded initiative.

TERM FOUR DISCUSSION AREAS:

The question: **What are our churches and their people doing in this area in our city?**

- Discover - Applaud - Encourage / Pray Blessing -

1. **Sphere: Media and creative arts**

- How are God's people engaging in these spaces locally?

2. **Seasons: Halloween and Christmas**

- What are churches, their members, businesses and others doing?
- What could yet be done?

3. Year-end thanksgiving, encouragement and storytelling:

- Consider a time of thanksgiving together, sharing 'success stories' related to things God has done in the past year in your city.
- Thanks to be extended to key individuals from within the various churches who have done something remarkable in their service to God in the city. ('Local heroes awards!')
- Prayer for growing opportunities in the new year – all with the purpose that your shared vision expands.

Applaud all efforts Pray a brief blessing on each effort after it is noted.

Extra: What might our responsibilities be to God and our people in view of the coming election?

(Note article and link to 'Value Your Vote' resource among the articles below).

4. 'In Unison' unity reminder

Uniting in common goals rather than programmes

Leadership is significantly about vision. In leadership, we get what we promote. There are things we can promote in the 'unity space' that can have a disproportionate effect if we do.

The potential effect of 'in passing' encouragements from a leader can be profound. In the unity space these can catalyse actions that work toward common city goals.

This article found HERE illustrates, while a most powerful example is the promoting (to establish) of prayer gathering in which Christians unite within every school and workplace.

What might the *grassroots* unity and prayer of God's people across a city or town catalyse?

Be encouraged: Your small encouragements matter.

5. Articles - for innovation and unity

New

10 Biblical Principles for the Coming Election

Podcast - 'A heart for the city' with Andrew/Amy Dishroon and Ben Mai

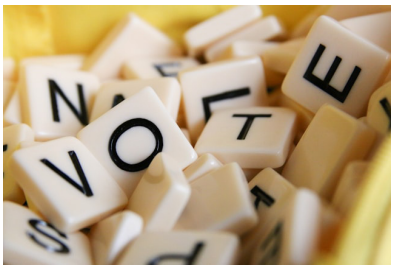
Christmas - a celebration for ALL New Zealanders, not just the Christians

Repeat:

- 10 keys to unity (A template to draw ideas from for 2027 planning)

NEW ARTICLE From the SLT:

Helping church leaders speak: 10 Biblical Principles for the Coming Election



Church leaders must speak. This simple article can help.

It outlines Biblical principles related to our political and economic systems. Church leaders could extract ideas for discussion through pulpits and in other conversations.

Because our political and economic systems were shaped by the Christian faith, it is particularly important that Christian leaders speak, because our freedoms are rare. As many in history have noted, only an informed/educated, moral and involved people can remain free.

>> Click HERE to read

NEW RESOURCE From Family First:

To inform: "Value Your Vote

"Value Your Vote' reveals the voting history and values of various prominent politicians. It can give us and our church members INSIGHT into the realities of how they think and will lead - which public media often doesn't reveal.

Copies are available NOW (new) from Family First - to make these available to your congregation.

It is commonly said that a people can only remain free (as we are) if they are moral, informed/intelligent and involved.

"Value Your Vote" helps us be informed.

>> Click HERE to read

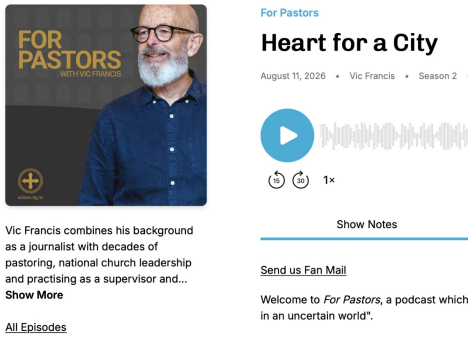
PODCAST:

"A heart for the city"

An interview with Andrew and Amy Dishroon (Napier pastors' group), and Ben Mai (Auckland Church Network)

Andrew and Amy are pastors of Engage Church in Napier, and Andrew the new local pastors' group convenor. Ben Mai is the manager at the Auckland Church Network, serving a vision for unity across Auckland city.

In this 56 minute conversation with Vic Francis they discuss what it takes to serve a city.



>> Listen HERE

NEW ARTICLE From the SLT:

Christmas: A celebration for ALL New Zealanders - not just the Christians

Might we as Christians have HIJACKED Christmas - unknowingly? This brief article makes this case.

It suggests there is a wider scope of opportunities to be found in our recognition of Christmas also as a CULTURAL festivals, purposed to represent and remind all New Zealanders of the origins of their freedoms, prosperity, equality, charity - and much more.

There is a wider message to consider, with profound significance to our culture – and faith.

>> Click HERE to read

REPEAT ARTICLE From the SLT:

10 Keys to City Unity Made Simple

This article was written in support of a specific city pastors' group that was looking at how they might more purposefully re-shape their efforts. An articulation of 10 simple keys resulted.

The goal was for *'simplicity, with effect'* - by way of the 'unity culture' and also the platform created *(and NOT for busyness).*

The ten points representing ONE vision, anchored within an intentionally 'discipled' environment. The suggestion is that the role of the group facilitator is therefore to **carry vision** and to **disciple the groups' culture** - not to be busy. It is about a paradigm of thinking and leading in the unity space.

>> Click HERE to read.

The next update will be mid-January, prior to the start of Term 1.

We hope this is useful for fresh vision, faith, encouragement and direction.

Looking to all God can yet do

Dave Mann

(Director - Shining Lights Trust)
AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups

SLT webpage about city pastors' groups: HERE
SLT articles on unity: HERE
SLT Messages / Q&A related to pastors' groups: HERE
SLT FB page for city pastors' groups 'Mahi Ngatahi (working together)': HERE
City by City FB page for city pastors' groups: HERE
Book on unity: Free download of Dave's book 'In One Spirit' - free pdf - HERE
Book on unity: Free download of Colin Shaw's book 'A House for His Glory' - free pdf - HERE