



SNAPSHOTS IN MISSION

KNOX CENTRE FOR MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP 2017



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THOUGHTS ON HOME

In 2017 a group of people from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand descended on Melbourne to participate in and present papers at a conference of the Australian Association of Mission Studies. Other Presbyterian brothers and sisters came also to listen and learn.

The theme was Reimagining Home.

On returning to Aotearoa Steve Taylor suggested that these papers would be well worth publishing for the benefit of our wider church – an investment in the mission reflection and activity of us all. Perhaps they could kickstart an annual offering.

So here they are. An offering of heart and mind and soul, imagination, faithfulness and challenge. Linked by thoughts on home. Broadening conversation. Joined by the story of a KCML initiative.

History is traversed, as is the present day, through colonisation, migration, innovation, transformation – community and individual home-making speaking truth, encouragement and possibility.

We trust you too will learn as you listen.

Ma te Atua koe e manaaki.

Rosemary Dewerse, editor.



Artist: Roelant Dewerse

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO HOME INVASION

Steve Taylor (Principal, KCML)

Homes provide us with safety. They protect our identity and nurture our values. At times, our homes are threatened. The threat can be direct, as an armed person bangs on our door. Threat can also be indirect, as different values and new sets of beliefs challenge established patterns.

The image of home provides a way to think about the future of Christian faith. What resources are available when values are challenged, whether through the diversity brought by migration or the slow creep of secularism? How should we respond to home invasion?

There are some rich, yet surprising insights when we turn to New Zealand history. Maori call Aotearoa New Zealand home and have had to respond to multiple moments of home invasion. Threats have been direct, with guns and indirect, with the arrival of many diverse values, aspirations and beliefs. What insights for Christian faith are evident in the response of Maori to home invasion?

Home Invasion

In 1769, Maori first saw English visitors.¹ When Cook and his crew stepped onto the white sands of Te Whanganui-o-Hei (Mercury Bay), they were stepping onto the home of another. Over centuries Maori had developed a “custom of living.” This involved moving from block to block, using fire to farm the fern and cultivate their boundaries, “so that it might not be taken from us by some other tribe.” When Cook stepped onto the foreshore, for Maori he was stepping onto home.

One who had been watching Cook was Te Horetia, a twelve year old boy. In his account, there is fear at the sudden appearance of strange white visitors, who he called “goblins” (26). There is also curiosity and surprising benefits as food is shared and knowledge exchanged.

Over time, these strange white “goblins grew in number.” The sailors, were followed by sealers, whale hunters and missionaries. Finally settlers arrived, bringing with them very different approaches to farm and forest. By the 1860’s, all land, rural as well as foreshore, was under pressure.² The Crown gave Waikato Maori an ultimatum: “retain your land only as long as you are strong enough to keep it.”³

The homemaking theology of Wiremu Tamihana

One response to this direct threat of home invasion was provided by Maori chief, Wiremu Tamihana. He is a remarkable man, who over his life offered three distinct responses to home invasion by home-making. Each provide insights for us as Presbyterians today.

First, in response to the indirect threat posed by the rising settler tide, Tamihana built distinct local community. Tamihana, born around 1805, mission educated, built, upon the death of his father, Ngati Haua chief, Te Waharoa, Christian pa. The first was Te Tapiri. The second, named Peria after the people of Beria in Acts 17:10 (suggesting the desire to value Scripture) was, according to Te Ara, “a model Christian community.”⁴ Peria had a church, school, post office, orchards, gardens and a flour mill. The building of an ideal home is one response to cultural change. At other times in Maori history, for example at

Parihaka, building an alternative Christian community has been one response to home invasion.

Second, Tamihana sought to restructure leadership. This was a political approach to home invasion. Historically, Maori had organised themselves around hapu. During the late 1850s, Tamihana worked to organise Maori under a King. In explaining his actions, Tamihana drew on Deuteronomy 17:15. “Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother” (KJV). The first half of the verse provides a Biblical mandate for the appointment of a king. The second half points to the need for a king from among Maori, not the Crown. This was a second response to home invasion, drawing on Scripture to re-imagine how Maori might work together in governing themselves.⁵

Third, Tamihana drew on Scripture in public speechmaking. When the Crown gave Waikato Maori the ultimatum regarding their land, the response by Tamihana was recorded in Great Britain’s Parliamentary Papers. He points to Ephesians, “Once you were far away, are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (2:13, KJV). The verse is addressing Gentiles as newcomers to the Christian faith. To paraphrase Ralph Martin, those who were once far away were those who once had no rights as citizens of God’s special nation.⁶ When used by Tamihana, he is suggesting that the Crown and the rising tide of British settlers are Gentiles. They were once far off and, by implication, once had no rights as citizens of this land of Aotearoa New Zealand. The second half of the verse in Ephesians

describes the offer of a new home, made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus. This shows a remarkable vision. Home is made possible through Jesus. It is obtained not by history (who was here first) nor strength (only as long as you are strong enough to keep it), but by the ethics of Jesus.

A vision of home, today

Tamihana offers a remarkable vision of home. Under threat of home invasion, he establishes an alternative Christian community, reorganises leadership structures and engages in public speechmaking, using the Scriptures translated in his own language.

So what might Tamihana’s theology of home mean for those of us living in New Zealand today?

First, admire the bicultural idealism of Wiremu Tamihana, who believed that two peoples could live peacefully in this land, sharing one Christian faith.

Second, tell the truth. Talk of home invasion is never comfortable. Yet being honest about our past liberates us to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly before our God.

Third, value Scripture. At every turn, Tamihana was shaped by a Christian vision, of Beria in Acts 17, of leadership in Deuteronomy 17, and behaviour in Ephesians 2.

Fourth, value our own (New Zealand) theologians. In Tamihana, we have a home-made public theology of home. He shows us how to relate Scripture to the future of all people who set foot in New Zealand. We often think of home as defined by the picket fences at our boundaries. What Tamihana reminds us is that life in Christ defines how we treat newcomers.

1. Alex Calder, *The Writing of New Zealand: Inventions and Discoveries* (Auckland: Reed, 1993), 26-30.

2. In the mid-1840s, Waikato Maori were estimated at around 18,400. In contrast, the European population of Auckland was 2,754 in 1844. By early-1860’s, Maori population had declined, to around 10,300 in Waikato. Vincent O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800-2000* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016), 225. In contrast, the Government had assembled a fighting force of over 12,000 men by May 1864.

3. Wiremu Tamihana, “Reply: The Declaration Addressed by the Governor to the Natives Assembled at Ngaruawaha,” May 1861, GBPP, 1862 [3040], 73.

4. “Wiremu Tamihana Tarapipipi Te Waharoa,” *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t82/te-waharoa-wiremu-tamihana-tarapipipi> (cited 3 October 2017).

5. For more see Richard S. Hill and Vincent O’Malley, *The Māori quest for rangatiratanga/autonomy, 1840-2000*. Occasional Papers 4 (Wellington: Treaty of Waitangi Research Unit, Stout Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, 2000).

6. Ralph Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991).

MINING GOLD

MISSION AND CHURCH AMONG CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN OTAGO

Kevin Ward (Faculty, KCML)

This year I began researching a story sitting on my doorstep – 150 years of mission among Chinese migrants in Otago.

Early days

It was the plan of the Free Church of Scotland to build a “godly society” modelled on Calvin’s Geneva “a Geneva of the Antipodes” in Otago, but there were never enough Free Church Scots wanting to take up the offer.¹ The discovery of gold in 1861 ended this dream. Then Chinese miners began arriving – men only, with a poll tax to pay. Many settlers were strongly opposed, believing, as one newspaper put it, that they “would pollute everything with their filthy touch.”² Evangelical Presbyterians had a somewhat different attitude; they were “a sphere of work which demands the earliest attention of Christians.”³

Alexander Don was one early missionary but there was little success with only about 30 baptised. Don in his early years was not able to rise above “the popular level of racial prejudice.”⁴ Another factor, now widely accepted in mission studies, was Don’s lament that “Surely it is not to be expected that the Chinese shall be evangelised by a European...As one of them has put it, ‘If China is to be Christianised it must be by the Chinese.’”⁵

In 1897 Don founded a Chinese church in Dunedin but, although there were 174 at the opening, and the confidence of a “good harvest soon,” it settled into small numbers for the following 100 years. There were few converts, although the first of these founded an Auckland church in 1910.

Don then visited the villages in Canton the NZ Chinese miners came from and was warmly welcomed. And so was established the Canton Villages Mission, which by 1925 had seen 500 converts and was significant in the establishment of the South China Church. Most of these converts came from the work of Chinese Christians, confirming Don’s insight.

Changing times

Over time there was a change in attitudes toward the Chinese. When letters arrived in the 1930s from missionaries to China telling of the horrors of Japanese bombing and occupation this brought sympathy, and led to agitation for Chinese families to be admitted as refugees. Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, was a Presbyterian and friends with some of the Chinese church leaders. This was granted in 1941. Meant to return home after the war, the Dunedin Presbytery took up the issue with the National Church. A delegation to the Prime Minister led by George McNeur (first NZ missionary to China) saw them granted permanent residency. The poll tax and other discriminatory measures were removed.

Historians now recognise the role of the Presbyterian Church in changing attitudes. James Ng, who came here as a five-year-old in 1941, suggests that “with the acceptance of Chinese as Chinese-New Zealanders has come the increasing adoption of Christianity among them. The good harvest is being reaped at last.”⁶

The Auckland Church flourished in the post-war years with Chinese ministers and a fully Chinese Board of Management. The Dunedin Church continued to struggle. In the 1960s, with no consultation, the Missions Committee moved to close it down and transfer members to the parish they lived in. A small group of five refused and continued, with help from some local ministers. Slight flourishing came after changes in immigration laws in 1987. Chinese from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Sarawak and later mainland China arrived, particularly students. According to Ng, things did not progress because it was “not allow[ed for] the Chinese community to move from its missionary dependence. It was run by Europeans as a European church.”⁷

The recent story

A dramatic change began when Dr Peter Liu, a medical doctor trained in seminaries in Taiwan and the US, arrived as a lay pastor in 1999. Finding a church of about 30 operating like a social club, his burden was to preach the gospel to new immigrants and form “a missionary church.” Emphasis went on leading people to faith in Christ, redeveloping a family cell structure, and bible study. Six cells began. Liu met weekly with the leaders for training. A student ministry on Friday nights started.

By 2001 attendance had grown to 100; from 2010, 190. Student ministry began with 20; it now involves 90. One of the most exciting things is that since 2000 there have been 200 baptisms, mostly students from mainland China.

Listening to, or reading, their testimonies is very moving and wonderful evidence of God being powerfully at work, at times a result of mission seed planted in China decades earlier. This church is unafraid to witness to the gospel, and offers friendship and hospitality.

Reflection suggests two lessons from this story.

- A missionary church will not expand and mature until organisations trust indigenous leadership and the work of the Holy Spirit (something identified by Roland Allen, a missionary to China over a century ago)
- People like to come to faith without having to cross cultural barriers, something Paul articulated in 1 Corinthians 9

Looking ahead

With a growing membership of younger professionals, whose children will grow up 1.5 or second-generation, evidence indicates members will generally not want to stay in these “cultural havens” but become communities that are genuinely intercultural. Recognising this the church leadership has called a younger pastor, Daniel Sun, to help them move in this direction and engage with the wider Presbyterian Church community.

It takes two for this to happen, however.

Recently I conducted a Presbytery review. The last (2006) recommended the “Presbytery seek to develop way to encourage closer cooperation with the Chinese Church.” Nothing has happened.

The story of this church is exciting but one long term Dunedin minister said to me recently, “Why don’t we know this?” Indeed.

Early attitudes toward Chinese in New Zealand were shocking, but our church helped to change them. Discrimination and racism remain. There is new work for a new generation: retelling old stories and crafting new; giving and receiving hospitality; establishing processes that welcome the riches of difference.

If we are to become the “multicultural and intercultural church” we stated we were in 2014, it is time to go mining for gold – together.

1. John McKean, *The Church in a Special Colony: A History of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago & Southland: 1866-1991* (Dunedin: Presbyterian Church, 1994), 26-31.

2. Laurie Guy, *Shaping Godzone: Public Issues and Church Voices in New Zealand 1840-2000* (Wellington: VUP, 2011), 84.

3. *The Evangelist, Vol II, No. 1* (January 1870): 4. PCANZ Archives.

4. Alexander Don, “Our Chinese Mission”, *The N.Z. Presbyterian* (October 1, 1884), 64.

5. Ibid.

6. James Ng, “Rev. Alexander Don: His ‘good harvest’ being reaped at last,” *Otago Daily Times* (Sept. 24, 1983).

7. James Ng, Interview, 19/04/17.

GOD IS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD TOO

Mark Johnston (Faculty, KCML)

It is my contention that an abbreviated theological imagination is sabotaging renewal of local mission. Insular lifestyles play an unconscious role in both defining and containing the geography of God's activity. Missio Dei – the understanding that the God of mission has a church, as opposed to the church of God has a mission (Jurgen Moltmann) and thus mission is an attribute of God (David Bosch) not an activity controlled and masterminded by humans – needs to be embraced. Bringing such a change, however, is not addressable simply by presenting theology. Popular imagination and awareness, reflected in church-lived praxis, is going to take new forms of action to shift.

God in an insular church

It is obvious from many quarters that churches in New Zealand, particularly in the suburbs of our larger cities, find themselves struggling with degrees of social distance from neighbourhood and locality. In the last couple of decades the pace of social change has intensified. Economic adjustments, immigration, housing un-affordability, natural disasters and institutional restructuring contribute to ongoing dis-embedding from locality. A sense of disconnect from neighbourhoods and isolation from neighbours is widespread.

As everyday life becomes even more diverse and complex, churches can become the familiar place of belonging and constancy for church members, gathered for purposes unrelated to the places in which people live.

Embracing gathered church models, Church life, despite all the rhetoric of mission, becomes highly introverted, aggregating spiritual and social significance to its own internal operations, predominantly on a Sunday. This retreat to an insular Church world is exacerbated by the attention required to resource this model, as members fund salaries, sustain costly buildings and volunteer to keep the multifaceted operations ticking over.

This form of church life, with its consequences for social distance from community and accommodating to dis-embedded lifestyles, is not a theologically neutral development. Gathered church comes to be regarded as a form of home-coming, a place for belonging and safety both for the human and the divine. In so doing, without realising it, insularity is mapped onto God.

As a result, the imagination in which church is “home” for God extracts people from valuing the everyday and seeing beyond-church activity as also spiritually significant. God's agency in the world is forgotten. Symbols, language, and programs lean towards valuing the internal operations of church as the only place in which God is trusted to be present and active, yet the local expression of church was never meant to be a final destination, the only place in which God is encountered and known.

Insular mission

An insular God imagination affects how churches typically go about their community mission. Firstly, are the “come



to us” invitations – strategies both religious and social designed to attract people to see the church as a potential home, a place and people to belong to, where people can expect to meet with God. Secondly, “outreach” amounts to excursions into the neighbourhood or surrounding vicinity. Programs imported from other contexts are introduced, and activities that can offer one-way tracks to a church’s religious and social life are favoured. The unspoken intention and criteria is seldom to remain with people where they are in their context, but to bring people back to the church context as home. Mission is centripetal. God’s action in the world is subsidiary to God’s action in the church.

Contextual attentiveness and deep listening to what is happening in the community or church members’ own lives in neighbourhood are seldom probed with lasting patience and humility. Discerning what the Spirit might be revealing and doing specific to here and now and the local existence of people is not a consideration.

But it needs to be. Or our God is too small.

Mission in Community: Listening in Mission

Over the last four years, KCML interns have been leading four-month long exercises with others in the congregations they are apprenticed to. They walk their neighbourhood streets, listen, dwell in scripture, and seek to discern the Spirit of God. In listening to God through scripture and for God as they walk their streets again and

again, imaginations are beginning to change. Mission is becoming centrifugal – an activity pulling people outward to discover and join with the Spirit of God at work in the world.

Intentional and guided dwelling is enabling some participants to develop a thicker appreciation of their locality. Discoveries are being made that register as exciting and revelatory. Neighbours are met, unexpected conversations take place, people feel liberated from feelings of alienation, anxiety, and fear about what “others” will think of them. Hospitable initiatives in the street have been hatched. For those who are regularly present in their residential communities, this exercise comes as an affirmation and a relief. Knowing their neighbours and paying attention could yield something spiritually relevant.

Shifts in imagination are detected when participants find new theological perspectives contained in the action-reflection exercises and the practice of *lectio divina*. When attentiveness to the Spirit of God is heightened, a change in reference takes place. There is a creative interplay between context, scripture, and people’s lives and attitudes. As Mark Lau Branson has pointed out, each facet affects the other. Prayerful listening to scripture makes us attentive. Being attentive in the community affects our reading of scripture and our lives; spiritual disciplines, including prayerful dwelling in context, change how we perceive and behave in our community contexts.¹

When God is in the neighbourhood too, then new possibilities are present. What has been regarded as not a place of belonging, not a home, becomes spiritually significant in people’s experience. Neighbours and community spaces are revisited as transforming places of encounter with God’s presence. The Kingdom is near and it is not just to be found in the Church.

A version of this KCML exercise, called Listening in Mission, is being offered by KCML to current ministers. The intention is to offer this each year through online webinars.

*Keep an eye on the KCML website for details:
<http://knoxcentre.ac.nz/>*

1. Mark Lau Branson, “Forming Church, Forming Mission.” *International Review of Mission* XCII, no. 365 (2003): 159



THE LITTLE CHURCH THAT COULD

Lisa Wells (PressGo Catalyst)

If we are to believe, as missiologist Lesslie Newbigin contended, that the congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel, then the study of a single congregation will tell us much about how the Good News is growing home in a community and how shalom is created there.¹

Nawton Community Presbyterian Church, Hamilton

Nawton Church was planted in a new suburb in the 1960s. Served well by ministers from its mother church as well as its own lay leaders, it took its role in the community and offered Sunday School, Bible Class, and a full calendar of social and fellowship opportunities. They did attractional mission well. However, as the golden age of full churches concluded, attendance dropped. Members became increasingly aged and wondered about calling a minister who could devote time to their needs and concerns.

In 2002 Nawton Church became a fully-fledged parish and leaders embarked on a series of consultations and retreats to develop a vision for the future. A part-time Children's and Family Worker, employed to connect with children in the community, inspired successful outreach well-served by volunteers, including a playgroup, a Kid's Club and eventually, a youth group.

The season of listening to God, to the community, and the participants of the programmes continued. It was clear the community had changed all around them. No longer a new suburb, urban sprawl extended on all sides and many local properties were now rentals, with others run-

down. Gangs were moving in. While the congregation was primarily older and Pakeha (although Niuean and Cook Island families had been part of the congregation for years), the community was 78% Maori, 15% Pakeha and 7% Pacifika. The church no longer looked like its community.

Who are we becoming kin with?

A retreat held by the leadership in 2014 confirmed that mission is more than programmes, more than serving. It is a deep connection with others requiring courage and perseverance. And so the leaders spoke to Nawton School, whose (Maori) principal was strongly supportive of holistic education, the need for pastoral care, and Bible in Schools. They attended community board meetings, consulted with Te Aka Puaho and Kaimai Presbytery, and talked to the parents of the children attending their programmes. All the while, they listened for what God would have them do next.

Some amazing promises of hope came from this time of discernment.

The leadership were committed to recognising that God is at work in their community, and willing to partner in ways that challenged their personal preferences and comfort. Not all members of the congregation agreed, but such was the mana of the leaders that they were prepared to "give it a go." It is significant that the two key leaders were the Parish Clerk and the Treasurer. Unity and clarity

of purpose between those responsible for spiritual and material oversight of a congregation is uncommon!

As a result of their careful listening, the church approached Te Aka Puaho about the possibility of working together to meet the needs of the community. This invitation resulted in Rev Hone Te Rire, an Amorangi,² making himself available to the church as a resource minister and to the school as chaplain and kaumatua.

Who do we share shalom with?

Employing Hone brings many threads of Nawton Church's mission together. It enhances the connection with the school and those families attending the after-school programmes. His standing in the Maori community brings mana to the church and people have got to know and trust him. Changes to worship services, including waiata himene and karakia, create a more welcoming environment for the majority Maori community, with baptisms, marriages and funerals for Maori families also in Te Reo. Rites of passage are important opportunities to make connections. Blessing a house after a suicide, meeting with a recently released prisoner, helping young men get out of the Mongrel Mob, writing "Hone's Korero" column in the community newspaper, holding a father and son breakfast, and breaking bread together also create welcome and share shalom.

Core members of the congregation work alongside Hone, the community and the school, willingly preaching,

teaching, providing pastoral care and administration. Almost all members of the congregation help in some tangible way, like knitting, cooking, transporting youth and giving generously so that everything is focussed on achieving their vision of God's mission being realised in the community. It is a delight to see a horde of children racing across the road to the weekly Café after-school club and equally exciting to see 80-year-old parishioners chatting with the children and helping with their activities and snacks.

In the church building, the first thing you will notice is a giant banner: "We are to be the heart, the hands and the feet of Jesus in our community." It is before them in all they do.

A new kind of home

Longstanding members have opened up their hearts and given up their own comfort to welcome the "strangers" in their community. The amazing reciprocity of this has been the gift of the stranger – opening new and life-giving ways of thinking. Engaging in God's mission, the congregation have grown in their understanding of their neighbours, the complexity of human experience and the grace of God. In their bi-cultural and multi-cultural journey they continue to be open to the new ways God will weave their stories together.

Nawton Church is becoming a new kind of home, something Newbigin said only happens:

"... as and when local congregations renounce introverted concern for their own life, and recognize they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society."³

1. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989).

2. Amorangi ministry is a strand of bi-vocational, non-stipended ministry within the Presbyterian Church.

3. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 232-233.



Morrisons

NEW MISSION SEEDLINGS

INITIATING CREATIVE TRENDS IN THE CHURCH'S WITNESS

Steve Taylor and Mark Johnston
(Principal & Faculty, KCML)

Times past

In the 1950s, what was KCML built a church. Every weekend, students from the Theological Hall would travel the 78 kilometres from Dunedin to the Morrisons by bus.¹ On Saturday, they would make mud bricks. On Sunday, they would preach. For several months, students training for ministry were involved hands-on in building a new community of faith.

Times change. Today, no-one would imagine building a church for a two house settlement on a 100 km/hr stretch of State Highway 85. The church building, unused for many years, was sold in 2014.

But KCML remains committed to training leaders in mission.

Times change

In 2016, Council of Assembly approved a new KCML strategic vision that includes collaborating to plant New Mission Seedling projects. Each word is important:

- New – starting new forms of community and action that communicate good news in changing circumstances
- Mission – because God in Jesus, so loved our world, and sends us in the Spirit to participate in the reconciliation and renewal of all things.
- Seedling – embryonic, local, expecting them to grow, but like the parable of the Sower, realistic, discerning and investing where there is receptivity

According to Michael Jinkins, President of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, innovation is one of “the most remarkable and vital hallmarks of our Reformed legacy.” Presbyterians have an inbuilt capacity “to draw from the experience of ancient Christian communities and to adapt these lessons to new situations.”²

For us as Presbyterians in New Zealand, connecting leadership training to New Mission Seedlings accords with ministry statements attached to the Book of Order, in which

*The ordinand is admitted to a fellowship responsible for the guardianship of the Gospel – a guardianship which must express itself in freshness and adaptability as the Church is led by Christ to do new things. The minister has not only the task of protecting the Church and the Gospel from error, but also, and particularly, the task of initiating creative trends in the Church’s witness.*³

KCML have underlined a number of phrases from this part of the BOO. First, fellowship. The minister is not a superhero leader, expected alone to create a new form of church. Rather, they are part of fellowship of relationships.⁴ Second, initiating creative trends. This will involve risk. Third, Church’s witness. This is not creativity for creativity’s sake. It seeks to embody the life and announce the message of Jesus today.

Times present

In change, you experiment.

In 2016, KCML sought a conversation with the Alpine Presbytery Strategic Taskforce. With three incoming interns from Alpine in 2017, each with a unique gift mix, where in the Presbytery might they best be placed? The Strategic Taskgroup had been conducting research into Prestons, a new-build suburb in Christchurch with very little community infrastructure. They noted that a particular intern could have the gifts and life experience to start something new in that context.

The Alpine Presbytery Strategic Taskforce approached St Margarets Presbyterian. Could St Margarets take an initial two-year lead in a four-way partnership between St Margaret’s, the Presbytery, KCML and the intern? St Margarets had good reason to say no, having had a major fire a few months earlier. But the Church sensed the Spirit was at work.

Mindful of Stage 1 NMS commitments (see the diagram), intern Charissa Nichol joined the only local community group, worked at friendships, and met with representatives of nearby churches and people from local Council. She invited Presbytery participants to a listening in the community exercise. Ten folk walked the streets of Preston with her, paying prayerful attention.

The initial listening team did not want to stop. They began wondering together about possible acts of gospel serving and community creation. A preschool music group, planning toward Christmas community activities, and creating “safe spaces” to hear stories were begun.

Commitment to “fellowship responsible for the guardianship of the Gospel” sees KCML interns in an NMS project connected with a mentoring minister and with an innovation cohort who, led by a KCML staff member, gather to reflect, pray and learn together. If the project grows, a Seedling Council is also placed into the NMS

New Mission Seedlings



support mix, initially with folk from Presbytery and local churches but increasingly, we pray, from the local community who have found the NMS project something they want to belong to and invest in.

KCML are working toward New Mission Seedling projects, one each in the five geographic Presbyteries and three Synods. Each will be different, shaped by the unique local context but also the diverse character of our Presbyteries and Synods. We want each to explore questions that we currently do not have the answers for. These could include How to grow Good News life in working class suburbs and fast changing city centres? Can new plants partner with agencies like Presbyterian Support? How does second and third generation migrant identity reshape what church can be?

Funding bodies like Presbyterian Development Society and Press-go have been generous.

Times future

Each NMS project will plan for seven years, providing space and time to develop something new. In seven years what might have grown?

- The possible base for new Presbyterian communities of faith
- A website with stories of what has and has not worked

- KCML trained ministers (NOM or LOM) with practical experience in initiating creative trends in mission

- Educational coaching in innovation and implementation, available to anyone in the wider Presbyterian Church

- Presbyteries with new capacity to think strategically and participate in mission. Some Presbyteries might see the NMS model as something they can replicate. They can direct financial support, set up nurturing conditions for NMS projects and draw on KCML educational resources as appropriate.

Being Presbyterian, committed to that “fellowship responsible for the guardianship of the Gospel,” partnership will be required. This could involve prayer, finance, participation in an education offering, or even a NMS project in your Presbytery.

In Morrisons in the 1950’s Knox students learnt by doing, church planting by hand. Today, through New Mission Seedling projects, KCML interns and church leaders continue to learn by doing, initiating creative trends in the Church’s witness.

For more contact

newmissionseedlings@knoxcentre.ac.nz

1. Shawn McAvinue, “Parish selling two churches.” <https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/north-otago/parish-selling-two-churches>. 28 June 2014. Accessed 8 May 2017

2. Michael Jenkins, *The Church Transforming: What’s Next for the Reformed Project?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 105.

3. Appendix D-4: Ordination and the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, (1966). The “appendices have a formal status ... [standing] as the understanding of the Church on ordination and ministers.” Heather McKenzie, Pers comm. Wednesday, 15 June, 2016.

4. Fellowship is not defined. It could be other ministers, and thus the Presbytery. It could be the Church Council. But New Mission Seedlings will be based on teams, working together in mission.

SPIRITUAL SEEKERS FINDING A HOME INITIATING CREATIVE TRENDS IN THE CHURCH'S WITNESS

Lynne Taylor

(Pastor, Student Soul)

Our churches generally desire and aspire to be places where faith is formed and develops, as well as places where people experience a sense of belonging. The overlap between these two dimensions (belonging and faith formation) was clearly evident in the stories of faith finding new Christians recently shared with me.¹

Olivia's story

Olivia's² anti-religious parents ensured she had very limited exposure to Christianity until she met some Christians at university. One, Hannah, became a good friend. Significantly, they became close when Olivia supported Hannah through a particularly difficult time. Hannah was willing to share her struggle and vulnerability; and a relationship characterised by mutuality began. Such an experience was not unique to Olivia. Others I interviewed described their Christian friends sharing stories that revealed them as imperfect, but sustained by faith. These friends were honest and open. They were vulnerable. The relationships that developed were characterised by mutuality and reciprocity.

It was several years later that Olivia accepted an invitation to attend church with Hannah. She described the service and following interactions as "kind and friendly and ... warm and welcoming." It was "sort of a real surprise that there could be this sense of community where I had never

really felt any before." Like the others I interviewed, this sense of warmth, welcome and belonging was crucial for Olivia's developing faith. It had been important in her earliest interactions with Hannah and the other Christians she had met at University. It continued to be important as she was gathered into church life: a church life that involved more than Sunday worship. She ate with her new friends each week after church. She became part of a discipleship group, and was given a Bible with study notes so she could understand for herself what she was reading. She was welcomed into a network of relationships.

As they journeyed, Olivia and the others I interviewed observed particular things about their Christian friends and colleagues. They saw Christians being helped by their faith, living differently as a result of their faith, sharing openly and honestly with non-Christians, being deeply hospitable, and allowing room for doubts, questions or complexity in faith. These ways that Christians were perceived were hugely significant in the converts' continuing to say "yes" to the conversion process. And many of them directly mediated the sense of warmth, welcome and belonging that converts experienced.

Indwelling

What was happening in these interactions? Theologian, Andrew Root, offers one way of understanding. Olivia's friends were doing what Root, calls "indwelling" others: they were sharing deeply in each other's lives.³ Root's concept of indwelling has resonance with an



understanding of the Trinity as inherently relational, characterised by mutuality, reciprocity and equality. My research suggests that the relationships of humans (created in the image of God) should also be characterised by mutuality, reciprocity and equality. Such relationships provided a sense of welcome, warmth and belonging that resourced the developing relationships with God of those I interviewed. As they experienced a sense of “home” with their Christian friends, they also began to come home to connectedness with God.

Hospitality and welcome are generally recognised as important characteristics for churches to exhibit. Theologian Cathy Ross embraces the biblical metaphor of “the Church as the household of God.”⁴ She notes that hospitality includes receiving as well as giving, and calls for a “mutually transformative encounter where hospitality is offered and received in a reciprocal manner.”⁵

This call for reciprocity is crucial.

Long before she had any connection with a local church, it was in the act of helping her Christian friend that Olivia was drawn towards relationship with God. Christians and churches, therefore, need to provide space for non-Christians to themselves initiate the gifts of hospitality.

The New Testament encourages such reciprocity. While we are called to invite party guests who cannot return the invitation, we are also invited to be guests (Luke 10:1-10). Jesus acts in the gospels as both guest

and host.⁶ In his interactions, the lines between giving and receiving, listening and learning, host and guest are blurred and challenged. Jesus, in the very incarnation as well as in various exchanges where he acted as guest and recipient, “modelled powerlessness and vulnerability.” His interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well is a classic example of this vulnerability.⁷ He presented not as an expert or hero with something to impart, but as a needy traveller, desperate for a drink. In the interaction that followed, the Samaritan woman recognised him as the Messiah.

Insights for churches

What do these insights mean for local churches, longing to be places of faith formation and welcome?

Having recognised the importance of relationships for human well-being, we should remember that genuine welcome and hospitality is characterised by indwelling: sharing deeply in each other’s lives. Those I interviewed valued the openness and honesty they experienced with their Christian friends. Their lives became entwined and they learned from and with one another. They acted for their Christian friends and their Christian friends acted for them. They communicated deeply and became known, as well as knowing. This is not just superficial chat over an after-worship-service morning tea, but a genuine relationality.

This relationality should be reciprocal in nature as churches and Christians act as both host and guest;

teacher and learner; giver and recipient. One-way traffic will not suffice. As Christians, we need to be open to receiving such ministry from our non-Christian friends. Allowing them to bless us even as we seek to bless them. Like Jesus, seeking help from them in our times of need.

These insights provide a framework for reimagining the home that churches could – and should – become for long-term members and spiritual seekers alike. Places of deep relationality, of welcome. Places where relationships are characterised by the mutuality, reciprocity and equality the Trinity models for us, as we grow towards imaging God.

1. These interviews were part of my recently completed PhD.

2. All names are pseudonyms.

3. Andrew Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 72.

4. Cathy Ross, “Hospitality: The Church as ‘a Mother with an Open Heart,’” in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue*, ed. Cathy Ross and Stephen B Bevens (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015).5. Ibid., 70.

6. Christine D Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1999), 16-17.

7. Ross, “Hospitality,” 69.



TRANSFORMING US

Rosemary Dewerse (Thornton Blair Research Fellow, KCML)

It is good to open ourselves to learning from those whom we do not usually spend time with. We will hear new voices and different perspectives. We may be reminded of things that are important to us, but which have been forgotten or neglected. And in those encounters the Spirit of God can transform us.

A year ago I joined a nine-month professional development course looking to grow leaders able to navigate our increasingly complex world – compassionate humans birthing imaginative and deeply integrated ways to transform our world for the better.¹

I was the only card-carrying Christian in a group of thirty.

There were workshops, readings, leadership and organizational theory to absorb, conversations, supervision and peer-group mentoring. It was all excellent. But it was three practical commitments that I want to feature here because I believe that if we recovered these in our churches they might just turn out to be little hinges that could swing big doors.

Commitment 1: Paying attention

We had numerous exercises that invited us to listen carefully to one another, knees to knees, giving our full attention, without interruption, through silence and through speech, until the person in front of us was finished. I wonder when you last experienced something like this – particularly in church? I found it very uncomfortable at first because we were asked not to look away and break eye contact. But the result was that within minutes of

meeting these people I felt as if the whole of me was being heard and held and honoured.

Conversations went deep very fast. I experienced genuine and profound interest in me as a person, and that included my Christian faith. Across those nine months I had opportunities to talk about my faith in ways and to a depth I have rarely experienced. I heard about their faith too. They touched my life; I pray I touched theirs.

Recently I spoke with two Presbyterian ministers. They were lamenting the relational superficiality that we have allowed to creep into our Christian life together. In their view, we have lost the art of listening deeply and long – to God, to ourselves, to each other, and to our contexts. One is finding that few today in the church and beyond are willing to enter into the vulnerability and the commitment that that requires. In a society where belonging and being known is becoming one of the deepest needs, paying attention becomes one of the greatest gifts we can give.

I have often imagined what it must have been like for the characters in the gospels to have encountered Jesus. Over the years my answer has been that I think he was someone who really saw people – the bent woman in the synagogue, Zacchaeus up a tree, the children in an adult crowd, the rich young ruler, the woman at the well, Peter on the beach.

In my experience, the commitment to paying attention makes all the difference for feeling at home. I would like to suggest that it could make all the difference to the next

person you meet.

Commitment 2: Embodying meaning

Margaret Wertheim, an Australian scientist-philosopher, once traced the impact of Isaac Newton's work on Western cosmology in a chapter, "Lost in Space," namely a separation of the physical from the spiritual, creating an unnatural dualism in our life as human beings.² Part of the flow-on effect has been the compartmentalising of self – mind, heart, soul, with a particular devaluing of the body.

We were often stopped and asked to listen to what our body was saying to us. We were given exercises and meditations to help us reintegrate our body into our meaning making as an equal part alongside mind and spirit of our human being.³

Many of our churches in this part of the world, have inherited a worldview that elevates dualisms playing out in divides between the sacred and secular (Sunday and the rest of the week), worship battles of words and ideas vs heart or silence, theological battles of experience vs reason, a denial of the body and, too often, in the othering of people and creation. The price of this is that in a world where Christianity is not the only possible referent we are becoming lost in this space. Divided, we fall.

Jesus's ministry paid attention to wholeness – to the whole of individual and communal life – to both/and. He healed people's physical bodies and their minds, forgave their sins, and cared about restoring their relationships with family and to community. He dwelt in creation,

dependent on it. We need to live and serve similarly.

Commitment 3: Celebrating beauty, truth, goodness.

There was a three-part frame of celebration across our course, of beauty, truth and goodness. It proved profound. Our conversations became flavoured with expectation, appreciation, delight, poignancy, awe, wonder, gratitude, and hope. There was also raw honesty, and deep questioning.

A quote from poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning came to me during the first retreat of the course when I tangibly felt God's presence in the community. I shared it; it became a theme for some. "Earth's crammed with heav'n and every common bush afire with God. But only those who see take off their shoes. The rest sit around and pluck blackberries."⁴

At times these qualities of heaven have been missing from my experiences with Christians and thus from our ability to witness to our faith with integrity to others.

Jesus deeply appreciated the beauty of people and creation – paying close attention and weaving them into his stories and lifestyle. He faced the truth as a vulnerable fully-human being, embodying grief, anger, and compassion in response to life's injustices. But equally the Word was full of grace – of unmerited goodness toward all whom he encountered, including the powerful, whom he met without defensiveness. Above all, Jesus placed himself, his ministry and his fate in the hands of God.

Just imagine the impact we could have in our world if we

were truly becoming like him.

1. <https://academy.metaintegral.org/epc>

2. Margaret Wertheim, "Lost in Space: The Spiritual Crisis of Newtonian Cosmology," pages 59-82 in Bill Bryson (editor), *Seeing Further: The Story of Science and the Royal Society* (London: HarperPress, 2010).

3. For more see Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

4. From "86. Aurora Leigh" in Nicholson and Lee (editors), *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (1917).

COMING HOME

Carolyn Kelly (Chaplain, University of Auckland)

Gentle winter sun spills through translucent grey linen with sparkles of light bouncing off the gold-spun filigree. The light and warmth of the freshly painted room at once highlights, and eases, my weariness.

I am momentarily distracted from my concerns by a cushion in French denim-blue, the fruit of a holiday-weekend shopping saunter that completes the furnishing of this comfortable, comforting corner. My eye is then happily drawn to that very blue in a Palestinian parable tile, catching the fish therein and lingering over the bread, broken. The startling teal contrast of soft leather in a Moroccan pouffe completes this Mediterranean circuit. It beckons: “stay, put your feet up.”

My eyes’ journey around this new room takes in other things: a Graham Sydney print (bought with our new-minister furniture allocation); a brass-topped coffee table found in Kaeo; my grandmother’s tea trolley hosting a resilient aspidistra. Then finally, leaning into the welcoming wingback coaxed from the corner of a favourite second-hand shop, I notice again the wool carpet underfoot, recollecting its negotiated extravagance as the piece-de-resistance of our recent renovation.

Arriving here comes after a long journey and the gradual re-making of a small house bought with friends, family, and bank finance. It is the first time we have crafted a place for ourselves – a room of our own, after half a lifetime in rental properties and church manses. This room’s gift is a belonging long deferred, a readiness to roost that we did not always acknowledge.

These ordinary, unexceptional objects now cause me to wonder at the gifts of nature and of human craft. This stuff of recollection and person-making prompts a literal re-remembering: I am re-called, strands of memory knit back together, my soul stills. Thus, my focus shifts... revealing patterns, the colours of God’s handiwork and loving provision. My sabbatical moment images that first day, when the Creator delighted in the goodness and beauty of the material world.

In this world, I belong. And within that deep repose is the ring of another home-coming; echoes promise there is another place even now being prepared by one “with many mansions.”

So I rest.

A place to lay one’s head

Homes deserve fresh theological attention as places of human being. Human embodied experience in and of the home is a sphere of graced activity and flourishing. Physical shelter and restful comfort are gifts of creation. Individuals and communities living well are an expression of Shalom.

Yet despite its role in personal formation, the domestic sphere of home-making is rarely mentioned, let alone the primary subject in serious theological discourse. The home and its hosts remain in the background, supporting and sustaining the people, ideas and activities warranting notice in the public realm or church.

Yet a place to lay one’s head in which one belongs and



flourishes is generally agreed to be basic to well-being, its absence a serious lack. Homes allow space not only for physical health and survival, but for fostering an integrated sense of self through safety, community, physical rest and nourishment, love.

Longing for home

We find ourselves longing for home, in more ways than one, and late-modernity tells tales of (at least) two cities. I live in Auckland, which sometimes looks and feels like the city of its brochures (“liveable”, “dynamic”, “diverse”), but also reveals itself as an all-too-fragile ecosystem with daunting challenges of homelessness and housing unaffordability, density and diversity. For many of its residents, the sense of home is elusive. Woven together with these realities are those for whom houses might be homes but they are also investments: objects to covet, win at auction, dress up, flick on; markers of superfluity and status. This is the “housing market,” and its vagaries indicate the holy grail of economic growth. In this city, real estate agents are the rock stars of the region.

It is not news that homes are a major social, personal and economic preoccupation. But can home-making be rescued from its excesses? Is there room for Christian reconsideration of the domestic space?

Renovating Christian aesthetics

With regard to ethics, few would argue that homes warrant attention. It should really bother us that affordable, adequate homes are inaccessible for so many,¹

especially if we believe that the Bible urges we love our neighbour as we love ourselves. The times warrant some deeper philosophical assessment of value and “wealth,” of how we think about culture and understand being human. But in addition to the imperatives of inequitable access (a justice issue), or the philosophical and sociological features of late capitalism (the truths of the matter), we might also consider the aesthetics of homes and their making – those aspects that attend to the lived experiences of particular persons and their embodied stories. Whilst safety, shelter and a place to lay one’s head are basic needs, Christian anthropology must surely allow for other humanising capacities: to hold and celebrate memories, to be hosts, to share in the delights of belonging, and to provide for others in creative and diverse forms. These “extras” seem also to reflect the *imago dei*, and their absence signals a loss of agency and diminishment, a life without abundance.

Understandably, these aesthetic aspects – the sensual, embodied, pleasurable bits – are most likely considered dispensable when other concerns are pressing. It goes without saying that when survival is at stake, resources should be distributed appropriately. We might discuss the importance of holding lightly to things and places when God calls otherwise. Nevertheless, a Christian aesthetic affirms beauty alongside truth and goodness, and that personhood is realised most fully when enjoying the “benefits” of a prodigious God who delighted in all that God made.

A Christian aesthetic should recall that a particular human home made possible the incarnation (after an unsettled start as a refugee). Tended, welcoming homes were at the very heart of Jesus’ adult ministry, and attentive hospitality was frequently the distinguishing mark of the disciple. The point of Zaccheus’ salvation was the moment Jesus invited himself to his home; Martha’s challenge was in not allowing herself to remain at ease with her guest. Later, Jesus’ words to his gathered friends took place in a carefully chosen room over a Passover supper, with bread and a cup of wine becoming vehicles of wonder and welcome... In that feast Jesus promised his friends, and all those since gathered round, that he would go and prepare a place in his Father’s house.

Coming home is what we were made for.

1. See for example the Salvation Army Public Policy Unit’s recent report, ‘Taking Stock’: <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-media/social-policy-and-parliamentary-unit/latest-report/TakingStock2017>





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