

Cycles of Hope

HELPING WHEN IT HURTS

Winter time sharply puts into focus the lack of affordable housing for the vulnerable and side-lined in our community.

Being one of the largest community housing providers in Christchurch, the Methodist Mission knows how hard it is for families on low incomes to find the stable housing situations that they desperately need. We also know what an incredible difference a warm, secure and affordable home can make to a family at risk of being homeless.

Providing housing is not always easy. Building new houses is expensive. Approaching landlords about renting their property for an 'at-risk' family is often met with a firm rebuttal. Despite news stories showing people sleeping in cars and on the streets, some in the community question why we help.

But housing continues to be a priority for the Christchurch Methodist Mission because every day we see the difference that a warm, stable home gives a family. We see improvements in parents and children's physical health and their sense of wellbeing. Once housing is no longer a source of anxiety, parents are able to address other issues in their lives. For some it has meant they have been able to gain employment, for others it has provided an opportunity to work on their parenting skills or deal with financial issues.

This winter, the Methodist Mission is helping those in need of a place to call home. Over the page, you will read about our emergency housing service in Blenheim and the sheer desperation many in this town feel as they

struggle to find the housing they need.

In Christchurch, the new Housing First initiative has begun and over the next two years, over 100 people who have been sleeping long-term on our streets will be supported into housing. This is an exciting multi-agency collaboration being led by the Methodist Mission.

The Methodist Mission is also providing emergency housing for up to 14 Christchurch families at any one time. This initiative also supports them to find and get settled into permanent housing.

Work has started on our new housing community in Hornby. By the end of July, three families who have been impacted by mental health issues will have a brand new, warm home where they are able to live long-term.

Pope Paul VI famously said "Never reach out your hand unless you are willing to extend an arm". The housing crisis that continues to grip our community looms large and requires that we all extend our arms in response. With your support, the Methodist Mission will do all it can to help those left out in the cold this winter.

*Thank you for giving as you are able,
Jill Hawkey
Executive Director*



HOUSING CRISIS IN BLENHEIM SHOWS NO SIGNS OF WANING

This winter families are facing the prospect of sleeping in cars and garages.

Every day 4 new people are dropping into the BETHS office in Blenheim and asking for help with housing. Each of these people represents one household that is struggling to find affordable housing in a town that has the highest rate of homelessness per capita in NZ. Large families in particular are struggling to find a house suitable for their needs. BETHS Manager, Janette Walker, has recently been supporting 4 families with a total of 8 adults and 19 children who were living together in one three bedroom house.

BETHS is short for the Blenheim Emergency and Transitional Housing Service, an initiative that began a year ago and is a partnership between the Christchurch Methodist Mission and Crossroads Marlborough Charitable Trust. Consent has recently been given for BETHS to lease the Brydan Motel for additional emergency housing for families finding themselves out in the cold. This will bring the total number of households being supported at any one time to 32.

Janette Walker says that her team is dealing with people that are highly stressed, either living in a car or at risk of sleeping on the street that night. "Households living in this and other situations are in a state of flux until they get into a stable housing environment. How can you work on the issues you and your loved ones face when you don't have a roof over your head or don't know where you are going to sleep night to night, week to week?" says Janette.

Blenheim is a small town with a big housing problem.

Blenheim is facing a real log-jam in the private rental market. A critical lack of supply means that the weekly asking rent for available homes is out of reach for many in the community. For a town of over 30,000 people, there was a turnover of only 132 tenancies in the past 6 months. "Trying to find a rental home is incredibly stressful. It takes lots of time and energy trying to justify your existence, why you need help," says Janette of the families facing homelessness in Blenheim. "In amongst this they are trying to work or find work and their kids are going to school. We know of many families living in garages and sheds who haven't come seeking help yet but probably will when the weather gets colder."

Many community organisations in Blenheim are referring people in need of housing to BETHS. However, Janette says that there is a real lack of understanding around homelessness from the wider community. "Generally they think it is unemployed people living on the streets with addictions rather than the reality of it mainly being workers and families," she says.



HOUSING FIRST BEGINS



Nicola Fleming is leading Housing First in Christchurch.

The initiative started at the end of May and staff have begun to reach out to the homeless in Christchurch.

Housing First Team Leader Nicola Fleming has hit the ground running. Since starting in April she has been busy learning about Housing First, spending time with the other organisations involved and interviewing staff. "The Housing First initiative is very exciting and is a great thing for Christchurch," says Nicola. "Being able to help a significant number of people in our community that are rough sleeping is a unique opportunity."

Housing First places people experiencing homelessness directly into permanent housing without the requirement of a transition period or to be sober or drug free. Tailored support services are offered to individuals and a Housing First support worker visits them at least weekly.

Nicola's team includes a cultural advisor, three key workers with expertise in mental health,

addictions and community development, two peer support workers with lived experience of homelessness and an administrator.

"Housing First is about gaining trust from people and giving them a choice. We have to take the time to talk to them and not go in with any expectations," says Nicola. "Some of these people have been badly let down in the past. Gaining their trust is crucial to them ultimately believing we can help and accepting that support. From there we will house them first and wrap around them whatever services they need."

Nicola and the team are in need of mobile phones, fingerless gloves, woollen hats and jumpers to give to the people they are working with. If you can help with this please contact Nicola on 027 641 5607 or nicolaf@housingfirstchristchurch.nz

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CARING FOR KAUMĀTUA IN OUR COMMUNITY

Wesley Village Whare Tiaki is helping reconnect kaumātua with their Māoritanga.

Willow Wi-Parata calls it her dream job. She is the kaiāwhina (support person) for Whare Tiaki which provides supported independent living for 8 kaumātua (older people) who would benefit by moving from their own home to a more supportive environment. "I love working at the Whare and supporting our kaumātua to thrive," says Willow. "The role pulls together my experience in residential care with my Te Reo skills and passion to help our elders."

What is special about Whare Tiaki is that it supports the kaumātua in connecting with the Māori world. Some of them grew up in the North Island but left their iwi to find work in Christchurch. They built a life here and got married, but may have lost the connection to their Māoritanga (cultural identity). As they have got older, they want to reconnect with the language and other Māori.

Whare Tiaki looks after the physical, mental and spiritual health of the kaumātua. Personal carers, GP's and community support workers visit the Whare and provide care as required. Each day Willow cooks lunch and another support person cooks dinner which the kaumātua love. "When some of them were living at home, the kaumātua ate very small and unhealthy meals such as noodles," says Willow. "They had lost confidence in their cooking and weren't making an effort because it was just them. Now that they are at the Whare, they eat healthy meals together and this has improved their wellbeing. A few of them have even begun talking about walking the next City to Surf."

A big focus of Whare Tiaki is helping the kaumātua to remain independent as much as possible and supporting them to push through challenges, rather than accepting these.



Stewart Rehutai, Sylvia Gillard and Tia Te Aika are some of the kaumātua calling Whare Tiaki home.

Outings are a big part of life for those at the Whare and help the kaumātua connect with hapori whānui (the wider Māori community). Some of the group outings this year include going out together for a hāngī, visiting family members of those at the Whare and traveling to Birdling's Flat. The trip to Birdling's Flat gave the kaumātua a chance to collect stones and talk about resource management such as eeling, fishing rights and how farms are impacting water. These outings have been funded by the Tindall Foundation.

Stewart Rehutai, one of the kaumātua at the Whare, described what being at Whare Tiaki meant for him by saying "tōku reo, tōku mana, tōku wairua, tōku oranga" – my language, my prestige and my spirituality is my health.

CMM has rooms available for older people in Whare Tiaki and other supportive living environments. If you would like to know more, please contact Housing Manager Andrea Goodman on 027 504 6760 or andrea@mmsi.org.nz.

SUPPORTING PARENTS AND THEIR WHĀNAU AT ARATUPU

For over 50 years Aratupu has touched countless families living in the surrounding area of Northcote, Papanui and Bryndwr.

From Monday through to Friday, Aratupu Preschool & Nursery positively hums with the sound of children playing and parents catching up with one another. Now and then a loud "Haere Mai Tamariki!" pierces through this wall of sound as a teacher calls the children to attention. It is a special place and a real focal point in the community.

Aratupu is a whānau hub with an early childhood education centre at its heart. Children aged between 0 and 6 years old have the opportunity to play, do physical activity, learn healthy eating and develop self-care skills in a positive environment which fosters independence. There is a strong emphasis on Māori culture and language as well as building effective and supportive relationships with children and their whānau.

Marcia Manson-Glover first started out as a teacher at Aratupu over 9 years ago and now job shares the Team Leader role with Katie Parks. "Aratupu is an extended whānau where we care

for, nurture and grow the whole family unit," says Marcia. "Every day I get excited to see the children and their parents and have some fun!"

The majority of children at Aratupu are from young single parent families who rely on a benefit or a low income with 95% receiving the WINZ childcare subsidy. The families mainly come from Northcote and the Jellie Park area of Bryndwr, two areas of Christchurch with high levels of poverty.

What is unique about Aratupu is the presence of Annie Smith, the on-site Whānau Support Worker. Annie provides wrap-around support to parents with children at Aratupu, ranging from food parcels and help with parenting through to supporting families to navigate the school system and assistance with school costs for their school-aged children. "Aratupu is a gateway for families in the community to receive the help they need", says Annie. "Often these families just need a helping hand to get through a particularly tough time."

Many of the families are disaffected from the health system when they first start at Aratupu and are not enrolled with primary health services such as GP and dentist. Through a partnership with Pegasus Health, Aratupu has two Community Health workers based on-site. Annie works closely with them to make sure families are enrolled and able to receive the healthcare and support they are entitled to.

Aratupu currently has space available in both the nursery (0 - 2 years) and preschool (2 - 6 years). Please contact Marcia or Katie on 03 352 6816 or feel free to pop into Aratupu at 97 Harewood Road in Papanui, Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 2.30pm.



Aratupu Team Leader Marcia Manson-Glover with Harrison George.

Thank you to the Strathlachlan Fund for their recent grant towards funding the Whānau Support Worker role



FOND FAREWELL TO SUE VAN DEURS

Sue van Deurs has recently retired after 14 years with the Christchurch Methodist Mission, including the past 6 years as the Social Services Manager.

Sue has had a 40 year career as a social worker and trained and worked in the UK before moving to NZ. Since 1994 she has worked for a number of organisations in NZ including Barnardos, Relationships Aotearoa, Presbyterian Support and Pillars. "I have absolutely loved my career in social work and have never been bored," says Sue. "I still remember some of the original children in care that I worked with back in London and wonder what has happened in their lives. They don't leave you, they stay with you."

There have been many high points in Sue's time with CMM but she is particularly proud of developing the ParentWorks programme.

ParentWorks is a two-stage group and home-based programme for parents who have children who are in care or where there are acknowledged care and protection concerns. "The changes we've made have had a huge impact," says Sue. "Over the years a remarkable number of parents have had their children returned to their care or increased their contact. It is still the only parenting group programme in NZ specifically for parents with children in care or at risk of being in care."

Her career has not been without challenges however and she has seen many changes in the sector. Government funding over the last 10 years has not kept up with costs so having to do more with less has been difficult. The Canterbury Earthquakes significantly impacted on service delivery and meant a time of transition and uncertainty after the Aldersgate building in Durham Street was lost. The Social Services team spent the next couple of years in 7 different offices before moving into their present home in Papanui 5 years ago. "The team will be moving into the City Centre in early 2020 as part of the new Aldersgate complex. This will enable the public to drop in and see the team, have space for group programmes and get a Methodist Mission presence back in the city," says Sue.

Sue reserved special praise for her colleagues. "I have had the opportunity to work with an amazing team of people who come to work every day and make a difference. Looking back I am proud of growing our social work practice together, working with children directly - and with the addition of child and family psychologists in the team - widening our knowledge which has had a hugely positive impact on the way we work with children and families."

Sue plans on spending more time with her grandchildren, catching up on things around home and more travel with a trip to Norway, Iceland, Greenland and Canada in the works.