

# WORD ON THE STREET

URBAN NEIGHBOURS OF HOPE - NEW ZEALAND December 2015



## Word on the Street

Jesus walked the streets. Wherever He walked, those that were on the margins, those that society had rejected, called out to Him. Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. His words were backed by actions and His actions were backed by words. Jesus walked the streets; Jesus spoke words on the streets. Words and actions that set people free, gave dignity, restored relationships, brought healing and reinforced that God's Kingdom on Earth was 'Up-side Down'.

We hope you enjoy this first edition of 'Word on the Street' from UNOH NZ. It comes from stories on the street, from lessons learnt as we journey alongside our neighbours. On behalf of the UNOH Team, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Bless you all

Dave Tims  
UNOH NZ Director

# The Mystery of God within Culture

by Denise Tims

Seeking to find and explore the mystery of God within my own culture, has been one that has challenged me, frustrated me and excited me. In the passed 18 months, I have grappled with how God has engaged with Māori through their culture, while studying some papers at Laidlaw Bible College.

It has been in this space, that I was encouraged at the annual Baptist Hui in Tauranga, this year, to listen to a presentation by Judge David Ambler. As I sat in a room full of Christian Leaders, listening to David's research entitled 'Lessons from the Crossroads of History: What can our colonial past teach the Baptist Churches of NZ today?' my ears pricked up.

David's experience and involvement as a judge in the Māori Land Court and a presiding officer of the Waitangi Tribunal, presented research on the attack in 1864 of Rangiaowhia. This history revealed the impact of the attack upon an innocent Māori village, full mainly of women, children and the elderly, that sadly left a sour taste in my mouth. The impact of this attack upon Māori, Pākehā and Christianity was significant, and revealed a powerful turning point "not only in the history and development of our nation but also for Christianity."

The conscious decision of Anglican Bishop Selwyn to accompany the British in the attack of Rangiaowhia, slaughtered the trust that Māori had towards Christian Pākehā leadership.

The killing and burning of the innocent pierced the heart of Māori, "damaging future relationships and attitudes towards missionaries." Trust was torn between Māori and the Pākehā Christian leaders and missionaries. Māori sought the solace and the truth of the scriptures for themselves. This ignited Māori initiated faiths such as Paimariri and Ringatu, which attracted many new Māori converts.

Today, we live with the consequences of these events, which offer us both heartache and insight. I see today, much pain and Māori mistrust towards messengers of the gospel. Yet, I also see a key, where God revealed himself through this pain, and called Māori prophets to draw Māori to himself. It appears that the greatest evangelistic movements occurred when Māori evangelised Māori.

Like many denominations, we find in our Baptist Churches, very few Māori. In our history and even today, a colonial mindset still blinds our vision to see that the mystery of God himself is interwoven into the fabric of an indigenous Māori narrative and culture, where spirituality is deeply embedded.

*Psalm 8:3-4 'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him...'*

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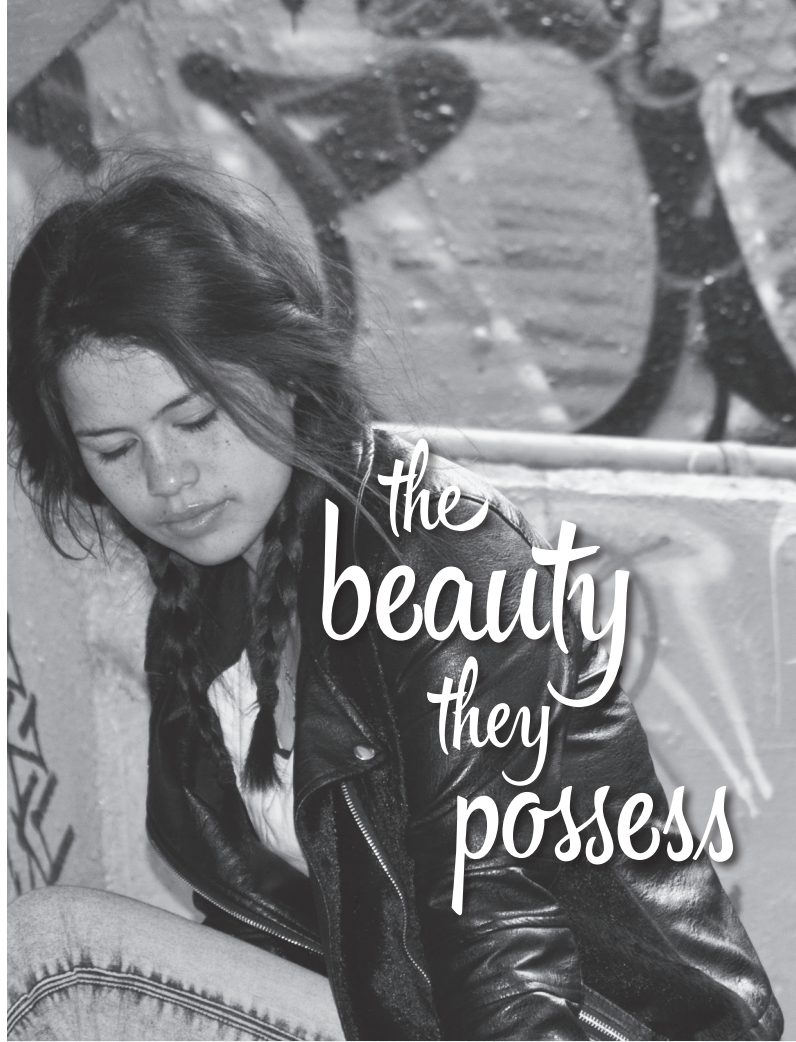
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Our assumptions and lack of knowledge of a culture's spirituality can prevent us from seeing God within it. As we uncover the truth, we find a people, who debated and engaged with a new theology, brought with the arrival of the Pākehā missionaries. This gospel of Christ and peace, aligned and also challenged Māori beliefs, leading some into choosing to follow Christ.

The most significant and insightful part of Ambler's presentation for me were the suggested practical steps he offered the Baptist churches to help develop a positive relationship with Māori. These comments and suggestions included;

- The assumption that the church is culturally neutral is false.
- As in the past, mission to Māori today, needs to model a holistic approach involving the spiritual, physical and material.
- Upholding Māori Christian leaders and ancestors of the past will encourage Māori identity.
- Decolonisation for Māori may be a journey to consider.
- Māori can hold both their cultural identity and Christian identity in one hand.
- The debate of whether Io is the same God as Ihowa (Jehovah) is one that Māori Christians should engage with amongst themselves.

We are blessed, that the God of the universe, chooses to engage with us personally, and collectively to see His Kingdom come. May His will be done.



*by Tonisha Rohe*

It was your average youth night, kids playing, leaders shouting and the sound of laughter echoing.

Everything seemed normal, until I was called into the office; I walked in and waited anxiously. "Show her," he said, I looked over and saw his wrists covered with deep red cuts. I couldn't help but think, this is nothing but a sign, to escape a large internal battle.

Instantly, my eyes began to fill with tears; I could feel my heart beating faster and harder and my mind was filled with a tornado of questions. Questions of why "our" kids face so much hurt and despair, how are we as leaders failing them, how are we as a society failing them. In a culture that boasts and acclaims that our youth are our future; somehow we still manage to allow countless kids to slip through the cracks.

It is in these moments that we are brought in to the despair of our youth, where we as leaders see the hurt, the rawness and the reality of people that most others don't. I carry this with great privilege and responsibility.

As leaders we see the broken homes, we see the consequences of addictions, we see children not living with their parents. I often think to myself, how can I be Jesus in those areas. If only our kids understood the beauty that they possess. A child made of righteousness and perfect innocence, designed to resemble God.

When we fully grasp what it means to bear God's image, we are struck with the grandeur of possibilities and become aware of our unrealised potential. As a friend, a leader, a Christ-follower, a neighbour and a good person it is important that we remind these kids how significant, unique and special they are.



# It's ALL in the question

by Dave Tims

One day, a good friend of mine rang, to offer me an opportunity that was irresistible, "Dave, next week there is a guy in town, he is brilliant, funny and inspiring, a real gem of a speaker. Do you want him?"

How could I resist, finding inspiring and funny speakers is always worth having, "Yep, would love to have him come," I replied.

"He will come next Sunday, driving a blue car. Can you wait on the main road for him, 9:30 am – OK?"

So, that Sunday I waited on the side of the road, 9:30 am sharp, watching for blue cars. Spotting one, I became excited, until I realised that it contained a young couple. A few minutes later I spotted another blue car, unfortunately the sole occupant was a woman.

Finally, after three more blue cars had passed, a blue car slowed down, waved and turned into our drive. Our speaker had arrived.

"Who can tell me how many yellow cars went passed that morning?"

We will only see what we want to see. We will only find certain answers because we are asking certain questions. Sometimes we need to ask a different set of questions to discover a different

pathway forward. This is the same for us in community.

Jesus did this. When his disciples were running around desperately puzzled by the problem of feeding 5000 men (Mark 6:30-44), Jesus asked a different question – "What do you already have?" Let's start with what the crowd, a young boy, already has. Let's honour and recognise who they are. Let's welcome them to the table and, together, let's solve this problem. Some how, through the mystery of God, no-one went home hungry.

Starting with what people have is a brilliant principle for solving problems, for empowering and celebrating others. We faced a recent problem in Randwick. Some of us are heavily reliant on public transport. We have bus stops, but no bus shelters. Locals recognised that other, seemingly more privileged neighbourhoods, had an abundance of bus shelters (e.g. every 500 metres was the norm). Over the years the local Randwick Park Residents Association advocated to the 'powers-to-be' to have bus shelters built. They were promised two, three years ago.

A group of local men decided that they had waited too long and so they

asked a different set questions. "Can we build our own bus shelter? Do we need to ask permission? Are we capable of doing this safely? Can we provide for our kids and elderly?" These are different questions, that provided new answers.

One weekend, ten guys gathered at the Tims' house, under the supervision of a local builder, and with the generosity of local people, a bus shelter was built. The only material bought was a sheet of ply & paint; framing, screws, wood, tools and labour freely given.

By the end of the day a miracle occurred that was far bigger than a bus shelter. A deep sense of pride, an awakening that a difference can be made, bonding with fellow blokes, the adrenalin rush of protesting and the joy of knowing that someone in our neighbourhood cares.

Last week, the Bus Company removed the shelter, but the memory and the story, will always remain – this is the mystery of mission.



# UNOH Worker Updates



## Eric and Anna Mailau

Congratulations to Eric and Anna on their beautiful baby girl Elsie Sisilia Lotohe-’ofa Mailau, weighing 4.3 kgs. Anna and Eric have completed their

Apprenticeship with UNOH NZ (3 years) and, after a period of discernment, have recommitted to UNOH for the next 5 years.



## Dave and Denise Tims

The Tims’ have completed 7 years of service with UNOH (2 years in Melbourne and 5 years in NZ) and will be on a 3-month Sabbatical starting mid-December and finishing

mid-March. The last 5 years in NZ has focused upon ‘building relationships’ in community and networking. 2016 is evolving into ‘employment and developing local business structures.’



## Wilson Chan and Esther Van Kuyk

Joining UNOH in 2016. Engaged, to be married in April. Wilson comes from a Youth Workers background and Esther is an Illustrator by trade and works as a PA.

Both are compelled by the underdog story overcoming odds to succeed.

They want to learn to love, to do life

and to empower neighbours into a new tomorrow, where life is experienced at its fullest.



## Tonisha Rohe

Has decided not to continue with UNOH, but will still be fully involved in the neighborhood, running a weekly Youth Programme and attending WOC. In 2016 Tonisha will be flatting with 3 other WOC girls in Randwick Park, while studying Social Science at Unitech.



## Ben Tamarua

Has completed his 2nd year at Te Wananga o Aotearoa, training as a Primary School Teacher. He decided not to continue with UNOH during mid 2015, as he needed to concentrate on his studies. Ben will resume mowing the lawns in Randwick as part of the UNOH Stepping Stones into Employment business.

# A Space for God

by Eric Mailau

“Remember your five bucks, it’s every week!” Barrie reminds us all. Our high school youth club called TNG; The Next Generation is led by four awesome WOCers (Warriors of Change), who are passionate about supporting and role modelling to their local youth. The WOC leaders gather together each Wednesday night at McDonalds to plan. This is yet another day these amazing guys take out of their week to come together for the sake of our Friday youth club.

This time, Barrie, one of the leaders, was reminding the rest of us about another commitment we had all agreed to; giving a five buck donation every week towards the youth club.

Vanessa one of our leaders spoke up, “I want to tithe towards TNG, because it’s something I see God working in.”

These guys already give their time, skills and other resources towards TNG and here they are handing over more!

In committing to our young people, meeting daily, and allowing space for God to invade we come across the mystery of God’s double pronged work. Yes He is with our work with others, but He also is continually at work in us; our conversions never stop. The multitudes of small reminders and choices our TNG leaders make each Wednesday and Friday is evidence of this.



love God. love neighbour. love self

## Urban Neighbours of Hope NZ

Cell - 021 0825 6001

Home - 09 267 1913

PO Box 75-218 Manurewa,  
Auckland 2243 New Zealand

[www.unoh.org](http://www.unoh.org)

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