



Kia Ora! As we sit to write to you, there are only 5 days remaining until our official launch of Westside Christian Fellowship at Te Atatu Peninsula in west Auckland. Flyers have been delivered, letters sent, friends invited, permanent signs posted, logos printed on shirts and coffee mugs (and anything else we could get our hands on)...and we've been praying. So it is with anticipation of the things God will do next that we bring this update.

Fishing on the Other Side of the Boat

Doug and Danette were recently teaching Luke 5 to a group of elementary school children. You may remember that Peter had been fishing all night long without a single catch. He and his crew were probably tired and a bit grumpy when Jesus announced, "Cast your nets on the other side of the boat." Peter, though he could have justified ignoring this "backseat fisherman's" advice, gave it a try. Through his obedience, God filled the nets to overflowing.

In some ways, our church is in a similar situation. The Church of God began in New Zealand eight years ago with a vision to reach immigrants in Auckland with the good news of Christ. Because of your support and the faithful service of Christian leaders, Auckland International Church has seen that vision fulfilled, at least in part. Unlike Peter's unsuccessful night of fishing, we have seen people significantly changed and families grow in their faith. However, we sense a call to reach beyond our comfortable church setting to reach a generation of multicultural New Zealanders whose parents and grandparents gave up on Christianity long ago. To be faithful with the message He has entrusted to us, we are working to identify and pull down barriers that keep people looking for answers elsewhere. In other words, God has called us to "cast our nets on the other side" through relaunching the church in West Auckland.

On February 18th, Auckland International Church had its final service at St. Cuthbert's College after meeting at that location for two years. In a service called "Intermission", emotions ran high as John Bennett, the father-in-law of David Ravell (AIC's founding pastor), gave a tribute to the history of the church and several people shared testimonies of what God has done in their lives through the church. We prayed and celebrated in advance what God would do through the new ministry of Westside Christian Fellowship.

On February 25th, Westside Christian Fellowship met for the first time at St. Paul's Anglican Church. For the next couple months, we will be meeting at this location on Sunday afternoons. This move is allowing us to build a presence in the community while we search for a more permanent place to worship. This church has warmly welcomed us into the community and it has proved to be a win-win situation. They needed additional funds and leadership for several community ministries - we needed a place to meet and serve in practical ways to connect with the community. As a result, we are now involved in teaching the Bible in the local elementary and middle schools, our youth groups are working together, and additional ministry opportunities are in the works.



Our new (but temporary) site with our very own sign out the front that we can leave up all week!

Westside Christian Fellowship will officially launch on March 4th. Please pray for the church this week as we look forward to a fresh "start" together. Over the next few weeks, some of our members will be playing sports in the park behind the church before the service to meet people in the neighborhood and invite them. We will also be providing dinner after the service to get to know our visitors better. Please pray for the individuals who are helping in these areas will be effective in their efforts.

Church Camp and the “Flying Fox”

On January 27-29, over 30 of us headed south of Auckland for our first church camp. This was a great opportunity to just hang out as well as gather together for one final “huddle” before our relaunch. Not only were we impacted by the messages of our guest speaker and worship leader, but also by some of the activities at the camp (only a few were physically impacted, but they’ll recover ☺. We’ll save that for another email). One of the activities was a “flying fox”. This was a 150 yard suspended cable that started on one side of a hill and stretched across a lake. Your objective was to connect your pulley to this cable and “zip” across without dying. No, really – it looked pretty simple until you stepped onto the platform and prepared to jump! The first step was the hardest part, but once you were off the platform, the ride was AWESOME! I guess there are some parallels to real life here. Even though we know God is in control, the first step is a bit daunting (OK, maybe a lot daunting). But the ride is great as we entrust ourselves into His care. As a church we have felt perched on this platform preparing for the jump. It is both exciting and scary to be at this place but it is only by stepping out in faith that we can fulfil the purpose that God has laid out for us.



Kathrin literally flying across the lake, making it all look so easy.

On A More Personal Note

Chad’s parents and brother, Marcus, came out to visit during January. We had a great time reconnecting and visiting places none of us had seen. Even though the weather was not too cooperative and Mom got food poisoning (hey, the chicken *looked* cooked), they came away saying it was the best time they ever had in New Zealand. It was a much-needed break for us as well.

Diane has officially started her classes in Animal Management at Unitec. She wakes up each day looking like it is Christmas morning, ready to go to school. Our dog, Missy, is also enjoying the additional attention and is already showing signs of better behavior. People have joked that Diane’s real reason in doing the course is to learn how to manage her husband better! But really, she hopes to use this as a career/ministry in teaching dog obedience classes or doing animal therapy with people.



Marcus and Missy playing with soap bubbles (Marcus is blowing them and Missy is destroying them.)

Prayer Requests:

- A successful start at the launch service on March 4th.
- We are currently in discussion with a factory owner, construction workers and city council representatives to secure a “permanent” lease site for the church. There are some important pieces coming together this week to let us know whether we will be able to renovate the building. Part of this is based on the financial requirements. Please pray that God will intervene and guide our steps to the place that we need to be.
- Renewed strength and wisdom as the workload increases over the next couple months.

Praises:

- We have developed some great friendships this past year, particularly with couples that are our own age. We had listed this as a prayer request some time ago, and are recognizing that God answered that in a big way!
- Chad officiated his first wedding in January for some of our friends in the church. It went great. We just found out another couple in our church just got engaged. Better get the suit dry-cleaned for another go!
- Five young people were baptized at camp this year.

Ways to Help

- 1) Prayer – We would love if you would join us in praying for New Zealand, and particularly the many young unchurched adults of west Auckland. Also see www.chaddavenport.org.
- 2) Financial Support – Thank you to all our supporters. Because of you, we are able to focus on ministering in New Zealand full-time. If you would like to help us financially, please send support to: *Church of God Ministry, P.O. Box 2420, Anderson, IN 46018 (Memo: Chad Davenport, Project #42.11235)*