

2010 Annual General Meeting Report

"What does the Lord require of you? Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Please remember 10.10.10 – the day to pray for Micah Challenge and mark 2/3 time for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

It is always interesting when preparing an annual report to check what was written the previous year. In beginning, I could simply copy the opening paragraph from 2009:

"This has been a difficult year. But is good to begin by acknowledging the goodness of God and the presence of God with us. God has allowed and enabled us to serve Him for another year, and for this I am truly thankful".

Amen to that!

In September last year, soon after the AGM, I underwent major spinal surgery to fix a long-standing problem. This kept me off work for six weeks and limited my productivity though to Christmas. Our work team, including volunteers and two staff who started last May, did a great job of keeping things moving in my absence.

On top of residual nerve damage from the operation, in January while on holiday I hurt my lower back (apparently not uncommon when another part of the spine has been reinforced with titanium). This meant further rehabilitation through to March. I am pleased to report these problems now seem to be over, though it was not without its upsides. The experience has given me a deeper sense of God's presence, and a profound appreciation for New Zealand's health service and for our team at work.

Vision and Mission

Our vision is to see the unity in the Church that Jesus prayed for (John 17:23) and our society living in accordance with God's will.

Our mission is summed up by the motto Gather – Build – Speak.

- Gather Christians together around topics of interest of concern
- Build networks and resources to help the Church be more effective
- Speak and listen to the Church and to society

There are two parts to this annual report – (a) The Year in Review, and (b) The Year(s) Ahead. All of the points in the first part have been reported in detail as they occurred throughout the year. Please feel free to contact me if you would like any clarification.



Glyn Carpenter
National Director

A. The Year in Review - September 2009-August 2010

Following are two summaries of key events from the last year by date and by topic.

Key events by date:

- **September** (immediately prior to my surgery) – I attended the National Church Leaders meeting to report on interfaith dialogues (Religion in Schools) and introduce leaders from the Rugby World Cup project. After the NCL meeting six of the church leaders met with Bruce Patrick and me to suggest ways of funding the network
- **October** – media became very interested in Destiny Church’s father-son covenant ceremony. Efforts to communicate with Destiny were unsuccessful
- **November** – I was invited to attend (along with 200 delegates including several cabinet ministers) a Community-Government forum funded by the Office of Community and Voluntary Sector designed to get input on a new Relationship Agreement, which would address issues of accountability, trust, and responsibility
Submission made on the Law Commission’s review on alcohol
John Fulford, former President of Associated Churches of Christ, and national prayer co-ordinator and friend of NZ Christian Network died
Undertook leaders survey of key issues for 2010
- **December** – spoke at John Fulford’s funeral
Attended meetings with Human Rights Commission to discuss difficulties in the process of the Religion in Workplace dialogue
- **January** – Communication for 3rd Lausanne Congress on Evangelisation
Memorandum of Understanding with Churches Education Commission signed
Planning
- **February** – Ran Kingdom Economics forum at Victoria University jointly with Andrew Bradstock from Otago University
Attended the national interfaith forum
Presented our annual plan to the National Church Leaders meeting in Wellington as well as an update on interfaith dialogues
- **March** – Ran Church Health/Growth forum jointly with Nigel Hanscamp (Methodist) and Lindsay Jones (Baptist). Presenters were John Daniel (Presbyterian) and Murray Robertson (Baptist).
- **April** – Ran Religion in the Workplace forum to gather ideas for the dialogue with Human Rights Commission
Attended World Evangelical Alliance Regional Secretaries meeting in my capacity as Chairman for the South Pacific Evangelical Alliance (At the same time attended the AGM of the WEA Leadership Institute and participated in a course with John Pearson on Building a Healthy Alliance)
9 media releases issued in March/April
- **May** – Liaised with Mike Knott (Elim, Wellington) to communicate on the 10th and final Global Day of Prayer
Resolve (Christian Conflict Resolution) asked NZ Christian Network Board to take over governance of their operation. Conditionally agreed.
- **June** – preparation/organisation for July forums
Planning/preparation for Congress 2011
- **July** – Ran forum on Climate Change (Clearing the Air) jointly with Jonathan Leaver from Unitec and Richard Storey and Rob Bell scientists from Hamilton.
Ran an initial meeting to discuss issues and opportunities looking ahead to the 2014 bicentennial of the Gospel in New Zealand

Featured in a NZ Herald article titled "Church forces 'secular NZ' retreat". The headline was typical exaggeration but overall the article may have been useful

- **August** – Meeting with Anglican Bishops to progress the Marsden 2014 Host a meeting with delegates going to the Lausanne Congress Activities in the next few week Attend Annual Religious Diversity forum to discuss Religion in the Media
- **September** – Planning/organisation for the 6th New Zealand Christian Leaders Congress (21-24 February 2011) Assisting with preparations for the Indigenous Christian hui (January 2011)
- **October** – Attend 3rd Lausanne Congress on Evangelisation

Key events by topic:

1. **6th New Zealand Christian Leaders Congress** (21-24 February 2011)
Theme - 20-20 Vision – The Gospel in the Decade Ahead
This next Congress will be a significant time of sharing plans and vision for the next decade. Plans are well underway. A draft programme for the event and a plan for the Congress book have been produced. We are currently in the process of contacting contributors, and three special guests from overseas have been invited (WEA president Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe, Jeff fountain, founder of the European Schuman Centre and former European head of YWAM, and Dr. Brian Winslade, National Director for Australian Baptist Ministries and former national leader of the Baptist Union in New Zealand).
2. **2014 Bicentennial of the Gospel in New Zealand**
After a meeting in August 2009 called by Bishop Richard Randerson to discuss planning for 2014, NZ Christian Network was subsequently approached by several of those present to take a lead in co-ordinating activities for 2014 other than the events which would take place on Christmas Day. After lengthy consideration, and after discussion with Bishop Randerson, we agreed to call a meeting of interested parties (mainly historians, evangelists, and Maori representatives).
3. **3rd Lausanne Congress on Evangelisation**
The 1st Congress was inaugurated by Billy Graham and John Stott in Lausanne in 1974. The 2nd Congress was in Manila in 1989. This 3rd Congress is being run in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). I have no doubt it will be a successful event with 4,000+ delegates interacting on issues and opportunities in evangelisation and missions. However the collaboration has had more than its fair share of challenges, particularly at the regional and national EA level. I am co-leading the New Zealand delegation with Jim Chew, and have already had feedback that our involvement is making things run more smoothly than with the previous Lausanne Congress.
4. **WEA Leadership Institute**
The WEALI was officially launched at the 2008 WEA General Assembly with the regional secretaries being appointed as Regents of the Institute. At the 2009 regional secretaries meeting, ten training modules were discussed and approved. These have been developed into four courses which can be incorporated into degree programmes. The first of these (Developing a Healthy Alliance Pt 1) was trialled as a web course at the beginning of 2010 with John Pearson facilitating. At the regional secretaries meeting in April we

had the pleasure of having John take us through this programme in person. I also joined the web trial course Public Engagement, facilitated by Chuck Stetson, based extensively on material from Ron Sider.

It is an interesting experience to work on public engagement projects and class skype calls with people from places including Kenya, Ivory Coast, Bulgaria, Belgium, Spain, Argentina, Dominican Republic, and North America.

With some fine-tuning, the course will be an important resource for any Christian leader.

5. WEA South Pacific region

As Chairman of the South Pacific Evangelical Alliance (SPEA) I was asked several months ago by a former General Secretary to help resolve a situation which has developed between former leaders of the alliance and other Christian leaders around the region. Unfortunately I was unable to assist at that time because of a lack of time and resource, but I said that I would endeavour to help out after our Congress in 2011 (possibly around the middle of the year).

6. Interfaith

While the NZ Herald article July 14 titled "Church forces 'secular NZ' retreat" probably will not have helped relationships, it did put the Race Relations Commissioner on record saying the "offending words would be rewritten". This relates to repeated references to New Zealand as "secular". Clearly New Zealand is very religious, a point we have argued for several years. Even the phrase "secular state" is increasingly open to debate.

NZ Christian Network has been involved since December on the Reference Group for the Human Rights Commission discussion Religion in the Workplace where we have already been able to make a number of significant changes. Other discussions are being initiated on Freedom of Religion (for which we have made a submission) and Religion in the Media.

7. Islam

Among the large numbers of emails we receive there are many relating to Islam. Because a number of these contain inaccurate or unbalanced comments, and also because there are many people who simply avoid the topic altogether, we have started a conversation with Professors Kevin Clements and Andrew Bradstock from Otago University about ways we might create a balanced discussion on the issue. We are hoping to meet together in November/December.

I have also met again with Mark Durie, a speaker with the Cross and Crescent conferences and invited him to join this conversation. Mark's latest book on Islam titled The Third Choice was published this year with endorsements from many internationally respected Christian leaders.

8. City Church

The concept of a city having one church with many congregations is already a significant driver for unity or ecumenical activity in many towns/cities around New Zealand, and as such it is important for any group like NZ Christian Network which is interested in Christian unity.

In the past 18 months key people in this movement have been wrestling with different ideas on the priorities for city church, but there are encouraging signs that after much dialogue there appears to be increasing convergence.

9. Christian Sports Network – Rugby World Cup 2011

We introduced leaders of the Rugby World Cup outreach project (now called Engage) to national church leaders in September 2009, and they received endorsement for the project which is now only 12

months away (10 September – 22 October 2011). If churches want to use this opportunity to connect with their communities they need to be thinking about it now for it to form part of their planning for next year. We continue to be involved in RWC meetings as a church liaison contact.

10. International Indigenous Christian hui (January 2011)

This event is expected to attract several hundred indigenous Christians from all round the world to Tainui/Auckland in January. We have attended initial meetings with organisers so that we can help with communication.

11. Love Your Neighbour – Churches Volunteering in Communities CViC

We have been directly assisting a LYN working group which reached the point of deciding that there was a need for LYN to do more than simply tell stories. The need was to train and equip people in churches around the country to engage with their communities in a holistic way. These people may be called community chaplains or advocates. A new trust has been formed called Churches Volunteering in Communities (CViC). This trust will be applying for grants and community funding to employ a person to get the project off the ground.

12. Rethinking Crime and Punishment

The RCAP group has also formed a new trust (in part also to help with fundraising). The group, which we have been involved with from its beginning and which includes a broad spectrum of Christian thinkers and academics, is generally concerned over the increasingly punitive policies coming out of the present government. The three strikes legislation and moves to disallow prisoners from voting are recent examples of this.

Groups like Family First do an excellent job of highlighting the need for attention on victims' rights, but in RCAP's view, their support for more punitive measures against criminals is not so helpful. In the future, we (New Zealand Christian Network) would like to find more ways to work with groups like Family First so that strategic issues can be talked through before they become polarised in the public media.

13. Micah Challenge 10.10.10

Micah Challenge is all about the Church playing its part in halving global poverty by 2015. The MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) are 8 strategic 15-year goals in education, health, and funding, agreed to by 187 nations (including New Zealand) in 2000. This represents an audacious goal to do something really remarkable which is realistically achievable, and undoubtedly dear to God's heart. 10.10.10 marks 2/3 of the way through the 15 years – a chance to take stock and see where we are up to.

The short answer is? 5 years to go, and we are behind on what has been committed.

If every church would get involved, by going to the Micah Challenge website (or linking across from ours), getting a resource kit, getting informed, and praying on 10.10.10, it would be a major step towards getting back on track.

14. Resolve (Christian Conflict Resolution)

Resolve's CEO decided in May that the ministry could not justify his part-time role and asked NZ Christian Network to consider taking over the governance for their ministry and becoming the initial contact point for enquiries. The Board agreed subject to logistical and legal issues being "resolved". Everything appears to now be clear for this to proceed.

15. Daystar

At the end of 2009, after a number of changes at Daystar since it was taken over by Media Inc (based in Australia), Julie Belding finished up as editor. When Media Inc made the decision to change Daystar to a completely electronic magazine for reasons of cost, they offered the NZ Daystar Board the opportunity to take back the magazine into NZ control. The Daystar Board elected not to take up this offer so the magazine is now completely in the hands of Media Inc. These decisions were made entirely between Daystar and Media Inc.

One option considered was for NZ Christian Network to take over the Daystar operation, it was clear that we did not have the capacity to do this. As we already produce an electronic magazine (v-Zine) the Board decided that there was no reason to continue the relationship.

16. Media/communication

At the 2009 AGM we reported that we would be putting greater emphasis on the "Speak" part of our motto (Gather – Build – Speak). This was also highlighted as a priority in the leaders survey conducted in Nov/December.

Much work has gone into improving the content and appearance of our monthly ezine and it is pleasing to report that the open rate has increased from 16% to 27%.

We have also been intentional about issuing media releases on significant issues (on average about one per week since March). Nearly all of these are picked up by Christian media (which is some proof of relevance). With the exception of the item mentioned above in the section Interfaith, most have not been picked up by secular media.

Our media advisor tells us though that they still fulfil two important functions: (1) they may inform and influence the media even if they don't use it directly, and (2) they build up an awareness that we exist which, if you are not controversial or confrontational, is an important part of getting on their "who do we call list?".

We will continue to comment on relevant issues.

17. Leaders Survey

The survey conducted in Nov/Dec asked national and city Christian leaders what issues we should be addressing.

The main church issues identified (in order of importance) were:

- mission/evangelism
- unity
- the need for better theology or Bible engagement
- rethinking church
- church growth or church health
- discipleship
- relationships/network

The main public issues identified were:

- social justice
- poverty and income inequality

This feedback has significantly shaped our activities and led to events like the Kingdom Economics forum, and media comments on topics such as leaky homes and inequality.

B. The Year(s) Ahead

Biblically orthodox Christians around New Zealand are active on many fronts, but many say we are not making significant progress on any of them.

If this is correct, then one of the reasons may be that we have not brought enough focus or resource (starting with prayer) to bear on any one of them to see a positive change. This would be a straightforward failure of vision and leadership.

Global

Internationally, two of the most serious issues are poverty and religious persecution. Micah Challenge will go a long way to addressing the first of these, the ultimate goal being to halve global poverty by 2015. It is a “Wilberforce-sized” project, and I am confident that William Wilberforce would have started or joined Micah Challenge if he had been alive today. If we honour the work that Wilberforce did 200 years ago, let’s play our part in dealing with one of the big issues of our own day, by connecting with Micah Challenge in time to mark the 10.10.10 milestone and for the years that follow. (Details linked on our website).

As far as religious persecution is concerned, we are connected to the WEA Religious Liberties Commission which is probably one of the most active groups in the world in tackling religious persecution. Being a supporter of NZ Christian Network is to be connected to this vital work. We have already used information from the Commission to write to the government’s foreign minister (Minister McCulley) twice in recent months about serious persecution of Christians in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, and we will probably be making regular contact with his office in the future.

National

The statistics on marriage, abortion, depression, addiction (including alcohol, drugs, gambling), inequality, and violent crime, are serious and it seems to many people that the Church should be making a greater impact.

There is strong evidence that Christians fare better on average than non-Christians on just about every social indicator we can think of. Yet this message is not getting through.

Apart from converting en masse to faith in Christ, the single societal change which could make the biggest impact on these negative indicators would be to build or rebuild a culture of marriage.

Referring to Wilberforce again, if it took 40 years to win the battle against the evil of slavery, could we commit to a task for 40 years, within the lifespan of many reading this, to end the evil of non-committed/non-marriage relationships which are at the heart of so many of modern-day societies problems?

I hope so. And I intend to meet over this next year with leaders of marriage ministries, as well as people in media, government, Church, business, and creative arts, to discuss a plan for achieving this.

I have mentioned that I am doing a course on Public Engagement through the WEA Leadership Institute. With some fine tuning, this is a course I recommend to any Christian leader, minister, or pastor, and I hope to be able to run one in NZ around the middle of 2011.

One exercise in the course was to identify our key goals. A Readers Digest version of the list I presented to the course is:

1. Organise and run Congress 2011
2. Work with other leaders to plan and co-ordinate Marsden 2014
3. Turn the tide of secularism
4. Rebuild a marriage culture
5. Reduce the rates of abortion
6. Help grow city unity
7. Strengthen task forces
8. Promote a theology of holistic mission

I am looking forward to discussing these goals with the Board and receiving any comments they, or anyone else, would like to offer.

The Team

I want to thank the members of our Team for another successful year in what have been unusual and difficult circumstances:

- Denis Smith (volunteer) who has managed our accounts for eight years since NZ Christian Network (**visionnetwork**) was founded in September 2002
- Helen and Alcock and John McNeil, who joined the team just over a year ago and who have improved the professionalism and quantity of our outputs, and who maintained the operation over the time of my surgery and recuperation
- Subhadra Krishna (part-time) working on accounts, subscriptions, and database maintenance
- Stephen and Gayann Phillips (volunteers) for managing our web systems
- Colin Kennedy (volunteer) for ongoing advice on media matters

The Board

I want to thank Board Chairman Bruce Patrick and all the members of the Board for their support at Board meetings and all the matters that occur in between.

I would also like to say a special thank you to three Board members who have served faithfully and who are stepping down at this year's AGM.

- Max Palmer was one of the founding Board members in 2002. When I started and knew nobody, Max was the person who seemed to know everybody. His connections and relationships have been invaluable as we worked to get the network off the ground
- Julie Belding has also been with us from the beginning. For seven years as editor of Daystar she played a key role in communicating our activities through the magazine, and many times her polishing of my contributions turned an otherwise rough article into something readable
- Ray Muller has been on the Board for three years and his encouragement, insights, wisdom, and experience of having set up a successful ministry, have also played a significant part in our development.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement and efforts on behalf of NZ Christian Network (**visionnetwork**).

I am also thankful to four people who have agreed to be considered for the Board or who are presently considering the invitation. Their details are attached.

Finance and Support

Two financial reports from our accountants are attached.

Firstly I want to thank God for the funds that have helped us serve for another year. I also want to thank all the members whose fees have helped finance our activities. At the start of the year we recommenced paying the national director \$1,000 per month, and in June this increased to \$2,000.

In May we reached a precarious point and had it not been for the significant support of two particular trusts, we would have had to reduce the scale of the operation. Obviously we are enormously grateful to those trusts for their support and faith in what we do.

As we emerge from this unusual year, I am pleased to report that Helen Alcock, whose role includes fund-raising, is building up a significant network of people who we hope will be able to assist us in the future. This includes work on a corporate sponsorship arrangement which we are hopeful could cover 15% of our budget and bring significant benefits to members.

In the meantime, finances continue to be tight, and we would appreciate any support you can provide.

Conclusion

The road ahead is not easy. But I am convinced, and many denomination leaders affirm, that NZ Christian Network is playing a significant role in fostering unity and more effective mission in our country.

The results, (except on rare occasions), will not come quickly. But I believe with all my heart that if we really focus on the core issues, and commit the necessary time and energy and resource, that we will see God's kingdom more evident in this country.

Glyn Carpenter

