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canvas

TERTIARY STUDENTS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP'S MAGAZINE

PEOPLE OF PRAYER





**He ākonga ki ngā ākonga hei ara
whakawhiti mō te Karaiti.**

Reaching students for Christ,
changing students for life.

TSCF's vision is to help students in
New Zealand become servant leaders
of character through the transforming
gospel of Christ. TSCF is a founding
member of the International Fellowship
of Evangelical Students.



Canvas is for all who are interested in
the work of TSCF in helping students
reach students for Christ. It seeks to
stimulate deep thought and provide
encouragement in the undivided
Christian life, promoting true witness
and the global reach of the gospel.

Send your thoughts, comments and
questions to us at
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CANVAS GREEN

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A TAPESTRY OF PRAYER

Bex Allen,
Communications Manager

Welcome to our Autumn 2020 edition of *Canvas*, my first as editor. I am excited to join the TSCF team, to be part of this passionate community committed to reaching students for Christ. As a university student, my involvement with TSCF was formative in my faith journey, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the spiritual formation of a new generation of students.

This issue, "People of Prayer," comes at a time when COVID-19 has led to significant upheaval in our world and our daily lives. In this time of uncertainty, our God wants us to turn to him. His Word promises that he is an ever-present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1), and he will come close to us when we come close to him (James 4:8). It is a time when being and becoming people of prayer is even more essential to our faith.

Prayer is an integral part of who we are as TSCF. All we do in serving God to reach students for Christ, we know we need to commit to him. In this issue, our National Director Ben Carswell emphasises that "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath" (quoting James Montgomery), and

we need to increase our oxygen supply from God, our source. Geoff Robson highlights the apostle Paul's understanding that his ministry would only grow through prayer, and that our lives of faith are only as strong as the engine that drives them. We hear from Kate McClelland about God's people at Festival One "weaving together their prayers for the nation" in a Sanctuary set apart for connecting with God. The Global Reach journeys to Nepal and Fiji speak of students growing a heart for overseas mission and gospel partnership within a culture of prayer.

Prayer is foundational to who we are as followers of Christ. It is both a privilege and a necessity. In his Word, God asks us to pray for many reasons. First, because this shows we trust in him and we are dependent upon him ("Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus says in John 15:5). Second, prayer draws us into a closer relationship with God, that we may be one with him – something he longs for (as Jesus prays in John 17:20–23). Third, God invites us through prayer to take part in the eternal work of building his kingdom.¹

This issue of *Canvas* reminds us of the need to weave our prayers through every part of our lives, creating a rich tapestry of close, dependent relationship with our Heavenly Father. The more time we spend in prayer, not just talking but listening, the deeper our relationship with God becomes. The work of art grows broader and more intricate. Each of our prayer tapestries combines to form a greater work as the people of God. My prayer thread interweaving with your prayer thread, interweaving with those of our wider family in Christ – across Aotearoa and the world our collective prayers connect us. Praying together, even at a physical distance, reminds us that we are part of something bigger – God building his eternal kingdom.

At this time, and in the weeks and months to come, may this be our prayer to our God:

*Make my life with you
a cherished tapestry;
me woven into You,
and You woven into me.* 🙏



¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*
(Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 376–377.



TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Ben Carswell, National Director

Unlike some on these islands, I am not a regular visitor to high altitude. Except for my travels on Air New Zealand and the occasional jaunts on hills around the country, I'm rarely too far above sea level. Following my recent visit to Ecuador, where I spent time with Ruth Hicks and her family and spoke at the CECE national camp, I have a newfound admiration for those who live life at higher altitude.

As I visited Quito, the highest capital city in the world (its elevation in the Andean foothills is 2,850 metres), I found the effects of altitude sickness more significant than I expected. It was nothing too major – an ongoing headache, and on occasion, noticeable shortness of breath, but the effect was real. For the first time in my life, I was reminded of the necessity of breath and the impact of decreased oxygen supply.

The exposure at high altitude to low amounts of oxygen causes a negative health effect that immediately sends signals through one's body that everything is not as it should be.

Whilst experiencing these challenges to my breathing, I was taken back to simple words

penned by newspaper editor and hymn writer, James Montgomery some years ago: "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air."

As Christians, prayer is supposed to be as crucial to us as our daily breath. It is meant to be our familiar air. And yet, I write to you as one who freely admits my own struggles to breathe this "native air".

I'm struck how in Scripture, prayer is presented as something we find hard. Think of the disciples in Gethsemane, where three times they fall asleep rather than praying with Jesus! As Jesus says of them, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:40–44)

In Luke 11:1, one of the disciples asks, "Lord, teach us to pray." It's something that doesn't come naturally, something we need to learn, something in which we need God's help.

In Romans 8:26–27, Paul tells us that, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."

It is wonderfully comforting to know that in something we find so hard, where frequently we fail, God meets us in our weakness. He knows that our "flesh is weak". He knows we need his help. He knows we need his teaching. And so, by his Spirit, he helps us in our weakness. When we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit intercedes on our behalf.

As TSCF, we recognise that prayer is our vital breath. We know that we need to pray more. As I write, the world is struggling to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Surely, our first response must be to turn to prayer? This issue of *Canvas* comes out of a desire for us to pray. As TSCF, we need to be a people of

prayer – as students, supporters and staff. And so, this is a call to prayer.

Would you join us in praying that students would meet and encounter Jesus on our campuses in New Zealand? Would you pray that they would be changed for life by him? Please pray for answered prayer in Auckland, where we urgently need staff to join the work. Please pray that across the campuses of Aotearoa students would be used mightily to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath." Take a deep breath and let God be your source. 🙏





Above Left: Ben with Ruth and Josué Hicks Olmedo, and their daughters Ela Paz and Ana Gracia.
 Above Right: Ben standing across the northern and southern hemispheres at the equator in Ecuador.
 Bottom: Ecuadorian landscape by Brett Schaffner, CECE staff member.

VACANCIES: STAFF WORKERS – AUCKLAND, PALMERSTON NORTH, DUNEDIN

*Do you want to see students come to know Christ and be transformed by the gospel?
 Would you like to be part of student mission in New Zealand?*

We are looking for people to join our team of staff helping students to reach their peers with the good news of Jesus. TSCF Staff Workers have the privilege of discipling Christian students through some of their most formative years, and enabling their authentic witness for Jesus. We are looking for Christians who love Jesus, love students, and are willing to join our team investing in students on university and polytechnic campuses across Aotearoa.

We are specifically looking for staff to join the teams in Auckland, Palmerston North and Dunedin, although we would be happy to chat about other locations as well. For more information on any of these roles, please contact personnel@tscf.org.nz.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS



MICHAEL BRESLER – OTAGO STAFF WORKER

Originally from South Africa, Michael has called New Zealand home for more than 11 years. He studied Food and Resource Economics at Lincoln University, and became involved with Lincoln Christian Fellowship, which reshaped his faith. After graduating, he completed the TSCF Ministry Internship Year (Minty) in Dunedin, where he grew a deeper appreciation for the work God was doing in the hearts of the students there. Michael is excited to now be part of the TSCF team in the deep south. He enjoys going for walks, listening to music, playing the guitar, trying different foods, reading, and playing ice hockey. It's great to have him on the team!



MAGGIE BARKER – P.A. TO THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

A Wellingtonian by birth, Maggie grew up in Christchurch and trained at the local Teachers' College. There she met her life partner, Chris, and had the privilege of introducing him to a personal relationship with Christ. She spent five of her adult years in Dunedin, and enjoyed the wonderful vibes of the student city. Maggie has three adult children and four grandsons. She considers her role as "Grandma" to be the most rewarding of her life. Maggie is pleased to have joined the TSCF team, recognising the amazing opportunity of discipleship during the student stage of life. She enjoys interacting with people, walking and watching movies. We're so glad she has joined the team!



THE STATE OF THE BOILER ROOM

Geoff Robson, Canterbury Staff Worker

Think of the most capable, gifted Christian leader you know. It doesn't have to be a personal acquaintance, just someone you've heard about – no doubt with a sense of awe and wonder. Perhaps he or she is a brilliant speaker or writer, filled with pastoral sensitivity and cultural insight; a zealous and charming evangelist, a charismatic and humble leader, yet somehow gifted at administration and able to reply to every email within the hour.

Would it surprise you to learn that this extraordinary, super-gifted (and probably hypothetical) leader desperately needs your help?

In particular, they desperately need your prayers. All Christian leaders need your prayers. Every TSCF leader needs your prayers. Prayer is the engine that drives ministry.

We probably all know this need for prayer to be true in our minds, but in practice it's easily forgotten or ignored. In a world that puts so much confidence in outward appearances – like the dashing and imposing Saul, who seemed the obvious choice for the

Israelite king ahead of weedy little David – we Christians can find ourselves deceived into valuing the same kinds of things. And while God clearly gives gifts to his people and works through those gifts, even the most gifted of Christians can't expect to see much fruit at all if prayer is neglected.

Probably the Bible's best and clearest example is the apostle Paul. No matter which gifted Christian leader came to mind for you, Paul's gift package was greater. Yet even this most extraordinary of all Christian leaders – the unique apostle to the Gentiles, a man of unparalleled culture, learning and theological insight – relied completely on the prayers of God's people for his life and ministry to bear fruit.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul emphasises just how vital the Philippians' prayers are for him: "Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." (Philippians 1:18–19)

It's an extraordinary statement. Surely the presence of the Spirit of Christ would be enough to give him confidence and assurance of his deliverance. But Paul doesn't just mention the Philippian prayer support as a nice added extra alongside the Spirit; it's on the very same level!

It wasn't just Paul's own "deliverance" that required prayer; his gospel preaching relied on it just as much.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." (Colossians 4:2–4)

"Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should." (Ephesians 6:19–20)

"Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you." (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

Imagine that. Of all the people who've ever lived, of all the gospel preachers who've ever opened their mouths, surely Paul had it in him to produce results. Surely he could be counted on to win at least a few converts with his bold, winsome, persuasive proclamation.

That's not how he saw it. The gospel would only "spread rapidly and be honoured" if God's people prayed. Paul would only have an audience for his message, and the ability to speak that message clearly and boldly, if God's people prayed. For Paul knew that only God can open spiritually blind eyes. Only God can bring about new birth.

The great apostle Paul saw prayer as the backbone of his life and ministry. He would attempt nothing without it. And neither should we. As TSCF, we know that our ministry of reaching students with the gospel of Christ will be fruitful only if God's people pray. Devoted prayer is



the power that fuels our ministry. And that's why we value your prayers so highly: we can't do without them.

But it's worth asking: if God is sovereign – if he knows what we need before we ask (as Jesus says explicitly in Matthew 6:8) and it's all up to him anyway – why do we need to pray? The short answer is because God tells us to.

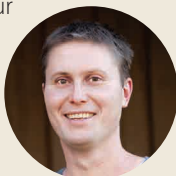
The slightly longer answer is found in the character of God. Our Heavenly Father is not a robot, nor has he created us to be robots. He is a relational being – our Heavenly Father – and he made us as relational beings.

As a relational being, he loves communication. He speaks to us in the Scriptures, and he listens to us when we pray. He doesn't need us at all, but in his infinite kindness he gives his children parts to play in the growth of the gospel. One vital part is our gospel speech – whether in a sermon, an email, a blog post, a Bible study, or one-to-one over coffee. Another crucial part is our prayers. And prayer is a glorious partnership, a gloriously relational act between a dependent child and a powerful Father. It is something real and

tangible that we can do, and yet its essence is in looking away from ourselves and toward the sovereign God. It is the empty hand of trust – faith in action: "God, please do that which we can't do ourselves."

It's said that Charles Spurgeon would welcome visitors to his London church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, with a tour. During this tour, he would take guests to a basement, where a small team of prayer warriors gathered as the Prince of Preachers delivered his message. Spurgeon called this humble little space his church's "boiler room". "If the engine room is out of action," he is said to have remarked, "then the whole mill will grind to a halt. We cannot expect blessing if we do not ask."

It's worth taking time to reflect on your prayer life. What's the state of your "boiler room"? Now think about the place of prayer in your Christian community. How do you contribute to the boiler room of your church, your local campus, and of TSCF? 🙏



Above: Canterbury Christian Union

THE LORD'S PRAYER

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.
Murua ō mātou hara,
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,
me te korōria,
Āke ake ake.
Āmine.

NIGHT PRAYER

Lord,
it is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.

- It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done
has not been done;
let it be.

- The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of
the world and of our own lives
rest in you.

- The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your
peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.

- The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.

In your name we pray.
Amen.

Source: A New Zealand Prayer Book – He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa [online version]
by The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.
Used with permission.

prayermatters

Pull me out and put me on the fridge to keep TSCF in your prayers!

Global Reach:

- Pray for South Pacific staff, volunteers and students as they respond to needs from Cyclone Harold, as well as the threats and challenges of COVID-19.
- Pray for CECE, Ecuador as many of the students and their families are in difficult financial situations as a result of COVID-19.
- Pray for ministry in countries badly affected by COVID-19 to be holistic, practically expressing God's compassion, generosity, creativity, love of community and his free gift of salvation.

New Zealand:

- Pray for staff and students across the country as they begin to consider re-shaping the year in light of COVID-19. Pray for students who have lost their jobs and are struggling financially.
- Thank God for donations, land purchase and design work completed for The Well (the planned student residential community in Lincoln). Pray for clarity in the design process, prudence in the budget, generosity amongst donors, and wisdom for the TSCF Board in decisions about proceeding.
- Pray for the Minister of Education, university and polytechnic management and student associations, as they navigate tertiary education delivery and student care at this time.

Lift up your prayers for our world and nation!



Auckland:

- Thank God that groups have all been able to shift to video meetings fairly easily.
- Pray for students to have the discipline and motivation to get into good study habits despite the unstructured freedom online learning provides.
- Pray for the evangelism training group that recently started, for students to grow in conviction and confidence, and to have the creativity to live evangelistically in a season of physical distancing.

Waikato & Bay of Plenty:

- Pray for students to discover more of who Jesus is and his call in our lives through our regular meetings.
- Pray for student leaders to grow in their leadership as they run our weekly gatherings.
- Pray that students we meet throughout the year are stirred to seek Jesus and come along to CF meetings.
- Pray that we would be Christians who lead undivided lives that help draw other students to seek Jesus.

Manawātū:

- Pray for the 8+ non-Christian students who are investigating Jesus with us this year, either in individual Bible studies with CFers or at the OCF Explorer group on Friday nights.
- Pray for the many first year students who got enthusiastically involved during the first month of semester, that they will still see the opportunities to lead in campus mission, and be keen to serve.
- Pray that the Lord would give us

You might notice that Prayer Matters looks a little different in this issue of Canvas.

Prayer is an integral part of our mission as TSCF. We'd love for you to partner with us in prayer for students, staff and events across the country and the world.

wisdom in following up the many contacts we made at Orientation.

Wellington:

- Pray for energy and productivity as students experience screen fatigue as well as the lack of motivation to do course work.
- Pray for students' mental health as they wrestle with the relational and spiritual challenges of social distancing, and uncertainty about the future.
- Pray that students would connect well with non-Christian friends and classmates so they can make the most of every opportunity to share the hope of the gospel.

Canterbury:

- Thank God for Christian Union being able to meet online for socials, small group prayer and Bible studies through the lockdown. Please pray that more students will continue to join us online in the coming weeks.
- Please continue to pray for students who are starting to feel the drain of everything being done online. Pray for good patterns of rest, time with God, study and lectures, and for opportunities to engage their friends with the hope found in Jesus during this time.

Lincoln:

- Thank God for a strong sense of community and fresh ways to connect with one another. Pray for students, as we are spread out around the country, that we would continue to grow spiritually in our personal relationships with God and in encouraging one another.
- Thank God for our student

leaders. Please pray for James, Luke, Caren, Rebecca and Alec for enthusiasm and creativity in evangelism.

- We had to cancel our annual camp due to COVID-19. Camp is a significant time for the group to build relationships and invite non-Christians. Pray for continued opportunities to get to know one another, to learn more about Jesus, and that we can have our camp later in the year!

Otago:

- Please pray for the 16 students and three staff living in the Harbour Light residential community, as we do life together. Pray that we can continue to grow as a Christ-centred community and to love and support each other.
- Pray for the TSCF groups as they continue to meet online for weekly Bible studies. Pray for wisdom and creativity for student leaders and

staff as we plan and prepare for the coming months, and as we consider the opportunities and challenges of online gatherings.

- With the cancellations of various events (e.g., student camps, The Mark Drama), please pray that God would guide us in new and different ways of doing evangelism and discipleship with students on our campus.

Minty:

- Pray for Michael, Renee and David, who finished Minty last year and are discerning and transitioning into what God has next for them.
- Pray for the reviewing of the internship in 2020 that we would have wisdom and creativity, and that it would continue to be a fruitful internship for graduates.
- Pray for future interns from across different regions and occupations.



INTERESTED IN SOME NEW PRAYER RESOURCES?

To help us grow in prayer, the TSCF staff have put together a list of resources across a variety of platforms. We hope you find it helpful!



DIGITAL RESOURCES:

There are various websites and apps that can facilitate our growth in prayer. Check out the ones below!

Websites:

Alpha – The Prayer Course

Develop your prayer life with this free course you can watch online at

www.prayercourse.org

Your church website!

Apps:

PrayerMate – Helps you keep track of prayer requests across different categories.

Abide – Provides prayer and scripture meditation on different topics.

Note: Your church directory could be a great resource for you to pray for people by name!

PRAY FOR NEW ZEALAND AND THE WORLD:

Have a look at these web pages dedicated to prayer from IFES, our sister movement, and other organisations.

IFES World Prayer

www.ifesworld.org/en/pray

IFES World Student Day

www.ifesworld.org/en/wsd

Lausanne Movement

www.lausanne.org/pray

Pray As One NZ

www.prayasone.nz

BOOKS:

Check out our staff recommendations below for ideas about how to make prayer a way of life, and how to pray more specifically.

Prayer

Richard Foster

A Simple Way to Pray

Martin Luther

A New Zealand Prayer Book

– He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

Pray Big

Alastair Begg

Enjoy Your Prayer Life

Michael Reeves

You Can Pray

Tim Chester

The Valley of Vision

Edited by Arthur Bennett

A Praying Life

Paul E. Miller

5 Things to Pray in a

Global Crisis

Rachel Jones
(and other books in this series)

Everyday Prayers

Scotty Smith



PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Bex Allen, Communications Manager

TSCF Staff Workers Chris Hay and Michael Bresler took six students on a Global Reach Journey to Suva, Fiji, in November last year. Bex Allen spoke to them about their experience and how prayer was a vital thread woven into their journey.

What was the purpose of your trip?

We went to Suva to connect with Pacific Students For Christ (PSFC), our IFES equivalent in Fiji, to support the staff and campus group at Fiji National University. Our goal was to increase partnership in the gospel – within our New Zealand team, between TSCF and PSFC, and between the Fijian staff/campus groups and the local church.

We were reflecting on Philippians in preparation for the trip, and we were striving for the Philippian model of partnership (with Paul). Our key scripture was: “Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.” (Philippians 1:3–5)

What did you do during your time in Fiji?

We were invited to the Fiji National University “Derrick Campus” to speak and pray with the acting dean (a former PSFC graduate). Also, some Fijian PSFC students took us for a tour of the University of the South Pacific “Laucala” campus, and we spent time looking around Suva, to experience the culture. We spent a day in practical service doing farm work for Homes of Hope (an organisation offering care and support to girls and women who have experienced sexual abuse). We also helped staff worker “Aunty Ateca” with renovations at her house.

To help facilitate partnership between the Fijian staff and their local churches, we were also involved with two churches – Namadi Baptist Church and Unity Baptist Church. We split our team between the two, attending their home groups and church services. I (Chris) had the opportunity to preach at Unity Baptist Church. Also, our students worked together with the local Fijian students to lead the youth group for this church. It was super



encouraging seeing our team take ownership of that; they did a fantastic job.

What were some highlights of your time there?

Due to a change in plans, some Fijian students ended up staying with us, which meant we could more easily build relationships with them. At the start of each day, we read the Word together, with the Kiwi and Fijian students taking turns at leading. It was great to see our Kiwi students and the Fijian students becoming friends. They got to build really solid friendships and still keep in touch now.

It was a highlight to see how PSFC has grown as an organisation and seeing a lot of young people on the board who are passionate about it. Also, seeing our students in leadership – there's something special about that. Even though we had a team devotion each morning, it was really encouraging to see every one of our team get up early every morning, or find a time in the evening to do an extra devotion. One student got really

passionate about what he was doing over there, and about reading his Bible.

What role did prayer have during your preparation and time in Fiji?

One of the main things we were praying for was partnership. Before the trip, the two of us were meeting regularly to pray and praying via Skype with "Uncle Dan" from Fiji (PSFC National Director, Taniela Qeleni). We were building our Kiwi team before we went by sharing testimonies and praying together. We were also praying with the Nepal team (as a larger Global Reach group) for an attitude of humility and learning. In Fiji we did a lot of praying for each other – Kiwis and Fijians together. We prayed personally, but also for each of our groups and campuses.

How was prayer important for the trip?

Prayer is so underutilised. I (Michael) was challenged by the idea of self-centredness. I think most of the time it's not that we don't want to, or we don't recognise the importance – we sort of forget, because we're just focusing on

ourselves, and we're so used to doing things ourselves. I've been thinking about that trip and our dependence on prayer. I have a quote from Tim Keller on my wall: "The best thing a man can do is pray; sometimes, it's the only thing he can do." There were certain things with this trip that I couldn't control. I definitely recognise the importance of prayer in that.

Prayer is kind of the engine that drives it, but you don't recognise it. I (Chris) think prayer does significant work, whether it's internally, logistically, growth, team synergy. Prayer does a lot of work, but unless we're looking, we won't see it.

What did you learn about prayer from the Fijians?

They often prayed, "Thank you for the breath of life." A lot of us were struck by the realisation that this day is a gift, and this breath in my body is a gift. It was normal for them to pray, and pray often, and pray about lots of things. It was very much a part of their ethos, their culture.

How did you see God at work?

God provided financially for the trip. Everyone got funded, and one of the students got funded early on, which was exciting for her. Also, we felt that God answered our prayers to build partnership. We saw the Kiwi students coming away passionate about international student ministry; you could see them becoming excited each day and afterwards. But also the Fijian students, who like us can feel isolated, they were encouraged and excited – here are these people who care about us and are excited for what we do, and are praying and supporting what we do. And the staff and student leaders of their Christian groups were encouraged. 🙌

Find out more about PSFC on their website: www.psfcfiji.org



NEPAL: GROWING MISSIONAL HEARTS

Bex Allen, Communications Manager

In late November 2019, a team of four Kiwi students led by Global Reach Co-ordinator Kim Shaw (along with Sean Marston of International Nepal Fellowship), travelled to Nepal. Their purpose: to connect with the local IFES movement, to experience life in another culture, and to engage with the Christian mission work taking place. Kim, Amy and Sophie shared their experiences with Bex Allen.

The journey to Nepal had a broad vision, emphasising exposure to cross-cultural mission to inspire the students, shape their world views, and contribute to their spiritual formation, rather than aiming to produce “results” at a local level.

The first part of the trip involved orientation to the cultural and religious background of Nepal with NBCBS, our IFES counterpart in Kathmandu. The team heard local leaders of different faiths discuss their beliefs, helping students understand how their

world views differed from Christianity. They also visited sacred places in the area, such as Swayambhunath (the Monkey Temple), Boudhanath Stupa – the largest Buddhist stupa in Nepal, and a Hindu cremation site. These visits brought their learning about religious world views and beliefs to life by seeing people actively engaged in different forms of spiritual and religious practices. Kat, a Malaysian-born Kiwi currently working in Nepal, was a helpful bridging person between the Kiwi and Nepali cultures.

Following orientation, the team spent a few days building a connection with the Nepali Christian university students, sharing experiences of faith in their different contexts, and praying together. The team also enjoyed sharing meals with the students and staff, sight-seeing, visiting Tribhuvan University – one of the top universities in Kathmandu – and playing various games (including a competitive futsal tournament!). Amy said of this time, “It

was a joy to share the commonality of our faith despite the differences in our backgrounds.”

Following their time in Kathmandu, the team travelled by bus on winding roads through rural Nepal to Pokhara in the northwest. Here they observed ministries serving the community. Touring the Green Pastures hospital (run by International Nepal Fellowship), they talked with medical staff and learned about the organic garden and farm financing the hospital. The farm sells vegetables to the local community and employs relatives who come to support the patients. Travelling to Gorkha, they visited a Dalit (“untouchable,” low caste) community who had lost their homes in a landslide during the severe earthquake in 2015. Asal Chhimekee (meaning “good neighbour” in Nepali), a local organisation run by the Pokhara churches, was helping these people obtain materials to rebuild their homes – an authentic and practical example of Christians expressing the love of Christ. Spending time

with a Kiwi missionary family in Pokhara and attending a local church service offered a greater understanding of this way of life.

Visiting Nepal had a significant impact on Amy and Sophie. They shared these reflections: “It was a life-changing trip that will give me a lot to ponder for a long time to come. Even (and perhaps especially) far from home, we saw the hope of the gospel transcending culture and language, reminding my forgetful heart that Jesus truly is the hope of this world. I am hoping that my time in Nepal will serve as a signpost throughout my life to take hold of this life and pour it out in sacrifice to God and the service of his good creation.” (Amy)

“What stood out was the relationships [with the Nepali students], as well as finding my place in God’s mission. Nepal is sort of a reminder that there are opportunities; it just depends on my situation and what God wants me to do. I was really encouraged by the staff



and students. They took every opportunity to spark something inside a person, just thinking more about life, and speaking into each person's life. I learned a lot about crossing cultures, about contextualisation. It carries across everything, even into my context now as an RA [residential advisor]." (Sophie)

As a cornerstone of TSCF, prayer was woven into the culture of the trip. In preparation and reflection, and hemming each day, prayer refocused the team on Jesus as the reason for the journey. There were prayers for provision, safety, unity as a team, that eyes would be

opened, that faith and courage would grow, that beliefs would deepen, and hearts expand for those of other religions. Prayers for the individuals, communities and ministries they encountered, and that God would speak to each student in the midst of what they were experiencing. These hopes were committed to God's care, trusting him to outwork his purposes for the journey and in the life of each team member.

The Nepal journey offered a diverse experience of cross-cultural mission. Elaborating on the Global Reach vision of TSCF, Kim explained, "We want students to have a world

Above: The Nepal Global Reach team.



Above: Machapuchhare (fish-tail Mountain).

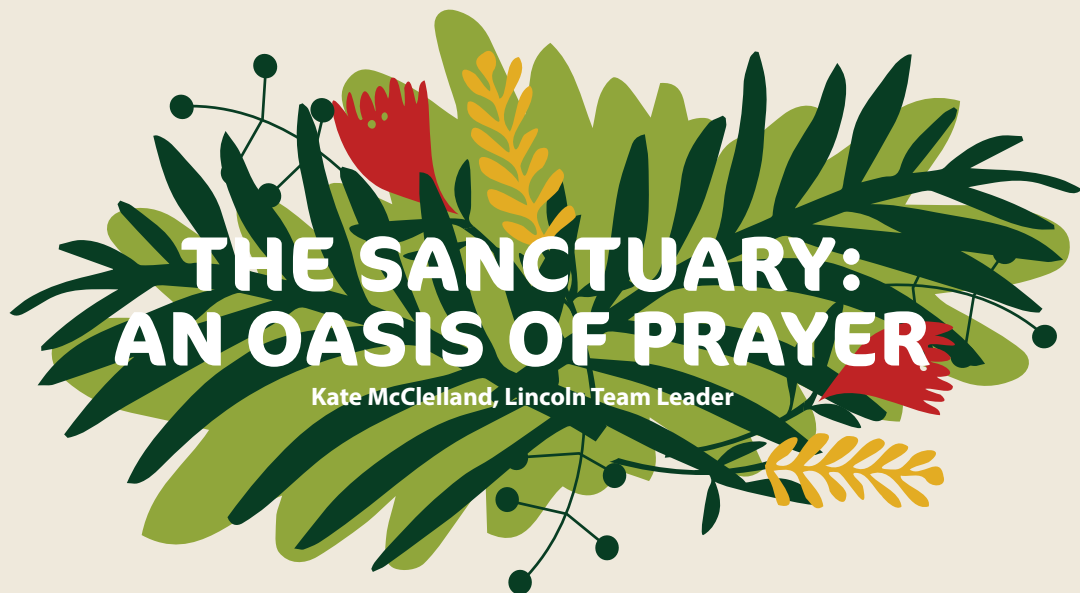
mission perspective as graduates of TSCF, to have their minds opened to possibilities they hadn't thought of before, and to explore mission experiences beyond New Zealand. Going to a place and spending time there is another level of engagement that takes things into the heart."

Tuning into this heart response is a significant part of processing a journey to another culture. Experiencing a way of life vastly different from our own can be confronting, and should lead us to ask honest and searching questions, as Amy has done:

"Perhaps this is a lesson we need to relearn: how to be present to our surroundings and circumstances, that our spirits may be sensitive to his nudges, that our hearts may be responsive, and our minds comprehend the spiritual and material needs of those around us. As our devices consume ever more of our

time and attention, the less we pay attention to the Spirit and the more opportunities we miss to speak and act for him. Between music and books and games and Facebook and emails and study, God is often crowded out of my day. I say he is the most important, but do I live like it? Am I building relationships with other believers to build up my faith, and with those who do not yet believe in Jesus that they may see a little of him in my life? Am I seizing opportunities and making the most of this precious gift of life, or am I living passively in cruise control with nothing really to show for it?"

These are challenging and salient questions for us all. 🙏



In the midst of a hot, dry summer, in the middle of a hot, dry basin at Mystery Creek, 5,000 people gathered together from across Aotearoa for four days of music, community, art and glorious Waikato sunshine.

At Festival One, the Main Stage, a grand feature the height of a four-storey building, drew the crowd in from their tents, with local and international artists moving, dancing and singing their way across. Just around the corner, perched upon a small lake surrounded by trees and complete with lily pads was a floating pontoon, the Market Stage, hosting folk, bluegrass and acoustic sets. Further on, from inside one of the large warehouses, the bass rang out as Rapture Ruckus played with all their strength for their last performance ever.

In amongst the music, tents, laughter and crowds gathered together, was the Sanctuary – a quiet place to think, pray, reflect and engage with the ways God was speaking throughout the festival. Creativity is inspiring, and the Sanctuary, put together by TSCF

staff and students, helped festival-goers over the long weekend to creatively engage their minds, their hearts and their hands.

The Sanctuary reflected the theme for the festival of “Hope now, and hope for the future”, asking the questions: “Where does our hope come from? Where is hope visible around me now? Where does hope exist for me and this world in the future?” Rather than providing the answers from the beginning, people were encouraged to sit with these questions themselves, to pray through them and to find answers within the Bible. Prayer stations throughout the Sanctuary helped shape those prayers, as people prayed for their communities, their nation and the world.

Stations were set up along the way to help people pray in ways that were perhaps different from those in which they were used to praying. One of these stations was a large nailed outline of New Zealand. Festival-goers picked up a piece of wool and threaded it through the nails. As they threaded, they



Left: Decorations in the Sanctuary. Right: The Market Stage.

prayed for the people and places that the wool crossed, weaving together their prayers for the nation. Across the weekend the volume of wool grew thicker and thicker as thousands of prayers wove their way right from Cape Reinga all the way to Stewart Island, through every region, town and city. One young boy wandering through the Sanctuary with his mum was keen to point out he had prayed for Christchurch. Young, old and everyone in between, the Sanctuary showed that prayer is accessible for all, that God our Father is accessible for all.

It wasn't just the prayers of people over the weekend that were significant. In the lead-up to the festival, we prayed that through the Sanctuary people would be refreshed in their relationship with God, form new ways to engage with him and that people may

come to know God personally, perhaps for the first time. Prayer over the last six years of Festival One has fuelled, grown and sustained the Sanctuary, and those who have passed through its doors.

As I reflect on Festival One, and a time of starting the year in prayer together with people of all ages from across the nation, I am reminded of the gift of grace we have in Jesus to approach our Heavenly Father: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15–16) 🕊





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