

## 2021 SNZ Youth Ministry Report:

### Vision:

The (part-time) role of the Conference youth pastor exists to help young people in South New Zealand to be disciples and disciple-makers of Jesus (to know, live and serve Jesus). We recognise that God calls each generation to be his hands, mouthpiece, and feet. As a Church, we are committed to helping young people know they are valued, needed and essential to the work God has for us. The Conference youth pastor role helps in this work primarily through, 1) advocating and educating for young people, 2) running memory events which provide unique opportunities for worship, connection and training, and 3) empowering and equipping leaders (appointed youth leaders and young leaders).

### 2021 Overview:

As with 2020, much of this year has been impacted by the pandemic and the new reality of navigating ministry with covid restrictions. This has meant that most Conference youth events have been postponed or rescheduled (NOTE - very few events have been cancelled as offering our young people *something* is always better than offering *nothing* and so we have preferred postponing and rescheduling where possible). But it has been incredible seeing the support of young people for events that have been run and their enthusiasm for taking the opportunities given to them.



### Supporting Leaders:

**Church Visits** – This year I have wanted to visit all our SNZ churches with young people at least twice. Unfortunately, a good portion of these dates have been cancelled (due to the lockdown and changing levels). I have managed to connect and preach at these churches though: Papanui, The Haven (Nelson), Bishopdale, GCF, U+I, Filipino, Ilam, and Rangiora. I also visited the Filipino church and Samoan Addington to support them for their Youth Week of Prayer program.

**Leader Visits** – in late January and early February I completed my annual tour of visiting NZ churches with young adults. This included meeting with leaders of five of our SNZ churches to support them and keep in touch. These included sharing a special **Leader Handbook** I have compiled and a resource called the **Burger Ministry Model** which helps assess where young people are at and what they need.

**Leader Dinners** – in March I conducted a special meal for leaders to attend. This was a special thank you for their leadership / ministry and a great opportunity for them to connect and network with other leaders. I ran one for the Christchurch and Northern leaders and one for the Southern leaders (for a total of around 50 leaders).

**Youth Leader Summit** – this annual training event for youth leaders and young leaders was originally scheduled for the first weekend of September but had to be rescheduled to the first weekend of November. Almost 40 young leaders attended this event (making it twice as big as last year's).

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### Service Opportunities:

Our young people, especially our young leaders, really grow in their calling and walk with Jesus with chances to serve. So, this year I organised two service trips to the North Island. The first one was in late February where I took a team of 12 to help run worship for a church camp for two churches – Mosaic and Capital. The second was a much bigger trip (in terms of scope, vision and numbers). I brought a team of 23 young leaders from the South Island to run 3 programs in Hamilton and Tauranga. The team were split into two groups who went to the Hamilton SDA school and the Tauranga SDA school each day to run a worship program, run activities with the students, and do service projects around the school. In the evenings the team came together at Hamilton SDA church and ran a revival series for the church. Then for the weekend, I ran an **Ignite Weekend** for young adults from all over NZ. This attracted 100 young people (80 from the North Island). These 3 events kept the team busy but provided so many opportunities for our team to get close, use and refine their gifts in multiple new avenues, connect and network with other North Island young people, and serve others.



### Memory Events:

For the first half of this year, our big memory events were able to happen as scheduled. In May we ran the **Basketball Tournament** and in July we had our annual **Junior Teen Camp**. Regos for the latter event had to be closed two months out due to reaching our maximum capacity. This has reinforced our desire to separate the camp back into two camps for Juniors and Teens next year. Part of the overflow of Junior Teen Camp was requests from five young people for studies and possibly baptism. Tulaga Aiolupotea is facilitating one of these studies with an Invercargill young person, Bec Poole is doing another with a Bishopdale young person, and I met weekly with the three others for lunchtime studies at CAS.

The second half of the year saw less stability with covid levels and has seen a few events need to be rescheduled – Volleyball Weekend (to late November), Youth Leader Summit (to early November), Big Camp (to January 2023), and the Pathfinder Camporee (to October 2022). Plans are currently underway for a Youth Rally to happen on the Sabbath of the postponed Big Camp (January 15) so that something can happen for our young people as a spiritual encourager for the start of another year. This will involve one of the planned Big Camp speakers (Keira Bullock) and offer a chance for our young people to start the new year off in worship and fellowship.

### New Initiatives:

Last year, during lockdown, an online livestream program to help encourage and connect our young people was organised. *Breakout* happened every Friday night through the lockdown and involved 5 youth pastors from all over NZ (SJ Riley, Tulaga Aiolupotea, Victor Kulakov, Willie Iererua and myself). For our 4 week lockdown this year, *Breakout* once again beamed out on Friday nights. The format this year involved SJ, Victor, Victor, myself and Keli Pepa and a new shorter format focussing on what the

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Word says about questions that come up during difficult times. Like last year, this was received well and received good views every week.

I also introduced a new monthly Friday Night gathering called REAL LOVE for the Christchurch youth. This informal program focussed on connecting, sharing and creating different experiences in different spaces every single time. It was an attempt to try some new approaches for our young adults and to focus on what we know many of them struggle with – actually experiencing meaningful connections with God and others at church. REAL LOVE has maintained good numbers each month and it has been excellent seeing young people engage with new experiences for growing their walk with Jesus.

### **Plans + Direction Moving Forward:**

Moving forward, it looks like uncertainty around levels and staying flexible will be the reality for youth ministry. But this does not diminish our aim of ensuring that all events and efforts for our young people align with the Conference direction of ensuring they get to *Know Jesus, Live Jesus, and Share Jesus*. I will help mentor and support Jeremy Flynn as he moves into the Conference youth pastor role for 2022.



**Support Local Churches.** I will encourage Jeremy to touch base with local churches and local leaders to see how he can best assist them with their youth ministry. I'm sure he will also continue to develop discipleship and leadership tools that relate to the current realities of youth ministry, covid restrictions, and young people.

**In-Person Events.** When possible, we will provide in-person events for worship, connecting and equipping. This includes encouraging and organising more opportunities for wider connections for our young people, e.g. local churches in a region coming together. This wider connecting is already happening in the Southland and South Canterbury regions and it would be great to see it more in Christchurch.

**Life Groups & Mentoring.** I will help Jeremy encourage local churches to organise and offer life/small groups and mentoring for their young people (where this isn't already happening). Our Adventist church has emphasized life/small groups and mentoring as the 2 biggest tools our young people need. Both these things are instrumental for effective disciple-making of our young people and are especially good through the uncertain levels of Covid.

**Conference Vision.** We will continue to align all youth events and training with the Conference vision of making disciples and disciple-makers, e.g. the annual sports tournaments are great opportunities for connecting, modelling and mentoring young people as they learn to play for God's glory and not their own.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement of our young people as they navigate through this difficult time as disciples of Jesus.

Lance

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