



Project Esther



CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2018



Welcome to our Christmas newsletter, we hope reading it brings you inspiration and joy.

While you read this in December, we begin preparing it in September which is the month we celebrated 125 years of our Suffrage women working hard on our behalf so women could vote. As Kate Sheppard said, 'Do not think your single vote does not matter much. The rain that refreshes the parched ground is made up of single drops'

We have the vote but there is still much work needed for advocacy to address gender injustice issues, which leave the lives of many women parched and limited. Every week at Project Esther we join in the journey of someone with limited resources, an unexpected event or a history/herstory of struggle and vulnerability. Hopefully our stories will highlight how single acts of kindness bring refreshment and opportunity for hard places to be softened.

The Christmas story covers a lot of ground around the need to address injustice and bring relief to parched places and hearts. Thank you for all the practical and financial support and prayers for our work. May we all continue to be mindful and compassionate with those on our path who are doing the hard journey of moving onto new ground. - *Daphne*



Dishonoured and unheard

"The first time that he hit me I was on the bed and he was slapping my face, side to side, hurting me. I just lay there and let him do it to me. Where did that come from?! I've not a clue. I didn't know it was abuse. That was early in our marriage; I was married to him for many years. Covenant is something to be taken seriously. I didn't think God ever broke covenants, so if we made a covenant with God, then we shouldn't break it either. Which sort of takes my mind down the road to - well, how bad is divorce then? I thought I had to keep forgiving him."

Mary invites us into her world as a Christian woman experiencing domestic abuse. It is not easy for women like Mary to find well informed and safe spiritual care. However, in this book women like Mary, along with pastors, counsellors, theology students and friends will find guidance grounded in scripture. Forgiveness, marriage as a covenant, headship and submission are explored. Drawing from women's stories, researchers and biblical scholars, this book offers a compassionate response to Christian women living with and recovering from domestic violence.

We have had a warm response to the book Dishonoured and Unheard: Christian Women and Domestic Violence. Opportunities to speak have included co-presenting workshops with Ruby Duncan about appropriate and ethical responses by church communities when women disclose domestic and sexual abuse.

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Waiora Ō Te Wahine

WōW - Wellbeing of women

The change of name for the Thursday morning Single Mums Support group came out of a recognition that we wanted to embrace and support all women, regardless of their situation and circumstances. Our Mission is to encourage healthy relationships and attitudes and a positive outlook towards wholeness.

"As a Mother raising a girl on my own, Project Esther has been supportive emotionally, spiritually and in practical ways. Ongoing support has helped me to raise a kind and intelligent young lady. Thank you."

"I am a single Mum of 3. On Thursday 3 May at 3.20pm I got a phone call to say my 16 year old son had been in sick bay all afternoon and had collapsed. A paramedic talked to me and said my son was being taken to hospital as he was hypoglycemic.

So my daughter and I got together some things. I got on my mobility scooter and my daughter got her scooter. We rode to the hospital where we stayed with my son and helped settle him in the Acute Medical Assessment Unit. It was 10.30pm when my daughter and I left the hospital. We scooted home in the dark, before cooking tea. We were both exhausted.

On Friday 5 May I waited until my daughter got home from school. We got on our scooters again and went back to the hospital. My son was told he could come home. We left the hospital at 5.30pm - I was on my mobility scooter, my daughter was on her scooter and my son had to walk. We ended up taking turns with my scooter as he had just been released from hospital and he was weak, with no energy. He just couldn't walk the whole way.

We got home around 6.45pm in the dark. We had to do it this way. I only had \$30 in the bank and a taxi is \$30 each way. We did it because we had to. Life can be like that, but when you have kids, you find a way."



"I never thought it could happen to me... For many years I have been aware of the special work Project Esther has done within the Spreydon community and wider Christchurch. The work with imprisoned women, babies, solo mums, and women within abusive relationships come to mind - the latter being a situation I thought could never happen to me, but it did.

After many years in an unstable, oppressive marriage I reached a point where I had had enough. Daphne and the team at Project Esther were there for my children and I. They offered financial support to help me leave, provided practical support like meals, and furniture for my new flat, and of course, wise counsel and a safe place to chat.

They continue to be part of my life having helped with funding educational opportunities and continued cups of tea and chats.

I am incredibly blessed to have such an enduring, well rounded support service available to my family and me.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I couldn't have done it without you."

"I want to say a massive thank you to Project Esther for funding swimming lessons for my children. My children were not confident in the water at all and they were missing out on fun at local pools and, more recently, their school pool. I could see they felt very left out and made excuses not to join in, plus I was very concerned about the safety aspect.

The swimming lessons have made a huge difference. To see them improve week to week and gain confidence, and how happy they were was incredible. At the end they both received certificates which they were so proud of. Now this summer they will be able to join in with their friends and I can feel more relaxed.

Thank you so much Project Esther."



"I'm so grateful for the help from Project Esther when I needed to take my IELTS test which is a requirement for students when English is not their first language before taking any course to study here in New Zealand. I passed the test and so I was able to enrol at ARA Institute of Technology and am taking Hospitality and Tourism. It's been a wonderful journey to be back in school and looking forward to getting a job soon. Thank you."

Last year we were able to assist Sue with the costs of a course she completed to become a Relax Kids course coach. A Relax Kids coach is trained to teach children and youth how to calm themselves and manage their emotions. This is Sue's feedback though 2018...

relax Kids

May

I am now in three schools and running classes for children in their Physical Education slot. I am getting a lot of enquiries each week from parents who are wanting this class for their children. I have connected with a woman and buy her essential oils to add to a Calm kit parents can buy after their child completes a course.

September

Relax kids is going very well. I've been in a low decile school this term and back to another school next term. I'm speaking with social workers and Oranga Tamariki to be on their books as a funded one-to-one course. I'm also working with two homeschooling groups and running a Calm Mum's session. I love it!

Thank you again for helping me to get where I am today teaching children such vital skills to deal with emotions.

Music & Movement

The Team Leader of the Junior Department at West Spreydon School used to bring her own children to our Music and Movement sessions. A conversation at school led to her inviting Linda and Stacy to the school where they led a session with the New Entrant Class. They just loved it and Linda will return to run a session with the Junior Teachers on using Music and Movement with the children.

Music and Movement takes place on Wednesday mornings at 9.30am and 10.15am, South West Baptist Church (term time only)



House of Kindness Te Whare Atawhai

At Project Esther our most frequent request is for emergency accommodation. The use of a house was gifted to us at the beginning of 2006 and since then we have had the privilege of providing accommodation to women in desperate situations.

A recent resident shares...

My teenager and I have suffered a lot while waiting on our NZ residency and work visa to be granted. We are grateful for, and have relied on, the support and kindness given us by many.

Being able to live in the House of Kindness was such a big help, like a stepping stone toward having a more long term dwelling.



Good, safe living conditions, after so many times having to move around, helped us so much. It was very stressful moving often and having to share a room at times.

Some security of housing helped us both relax a bit and really helped my teenager's confidence and mental wellbeing. My teenager was able to focus on schoolwork and we had the benefit of our own bedrooms! That took away some of the stress.

We also appreciate very much the other practical help Project Esther was able to give us. "

Christchurch Womens Prison

Over the past couple of years I have had the privilege and pleasure to assist in card making and remedial reading at Christchurch Women's Prison.

I enjoy the interaction with the women and the chance to hear and share in some of their life stories, in the knowledge that the majority of these women have never had the opportunities that I have had, and that knowledge humbles me.

My hope is that prison can actually provide a new beginning - a chance to learn new life and future employment skills, with the necessary support that will allow these women to take back some measure of control over their lives.

As I journey with these women, I hope I can play a small, positive part in that.

Ma te wa - grace and peace, Debbie

The inmates at the Christchurch Women's Prison have knitted and crocheted over 100 garments for the newborn babies at Christchurch Women's Hospital. Project Esther has been delighted to be part of this initiative, with donations of wool.



2018 Highlights



Assembling Christmas gifts in 2017 for the Women at the Prison



In August we supported The Parenting Place in presenting a session on 'How to talk about porn, sex and technology.' We had over 100 people attend and received great feedback on the value of the event.



Red Cross First Aid revalidation for Stacy & Ev



Daphne Marsden & Ruby Duncan hosting Workshops resourcing Church Communities in responding to Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse



Stacy spent a weekend at Deaf Camp 2018



One of our Music & Movement families gave us a farewell gift as they were off to school

Thank you for taking the time to read our Christmas newsletter. We hope and pray that you and those you love are enriched this season with the gifts of peace, joy and love.

From the team at Project Esther



We want to acknowledge those who have made it financially possible to continue doing the work we do

David Ellison Charitable Trust
Farina Thompson Charitable Trust
COGS
Christchurch City Council
Anstiss-Garland Charitable Trust

Christchurch Casino Charitable Trust
Rata Foundation
NZ Charitable Foundation
Baptist Children's Trust
Lottery

Buildtech
United Way
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The Trusts Community Foundation