

Project

# ESTHER

caring for women and families



## Christmas Newsletter 2016

### Away in a manger, no place for a bed

"She will sleep in the park." This is what a mother said on the phone about her daughter. She then asked, "Can Project Esther help?" The same week I read an article in The Christchurch Press describing in more detail the mother and daughter's story, their plight and that of other women who fall between the cracks in our community, when offending and mental health issues combine.

With Christmas approaching, the statement "She will sleep in the park" reminds me of the Christmas carol we sing 'Away in a manger, no crib for a bed.' God's choice of a birthplace in the context of poverty, rather than riches, points to a compassionate alignment and identification with those dispossessed and marginalised in our community. It was quite a political stance by God as a well resourced parent.

As carols reach our ears this Christmas, let's make room for the true essence of 'God with us' to reach our hearts. The plight of such women in our community needs to be addressed and could be improved. Let's make a fuss.

Daphne



Daphne



### Kathleen Woodside

This year we reluctantly and sadly said farewell to a dear member of the Project Esther team. For many years Kathleen served us as a trustee and latterly she was overseeing and supporting our accounting and human resources needs.

We have lovely memories of Kathleen carrying heavy bags full of our documents and files into the office, getting us sorted for auditing, sharing cups of tea and telling us stories about Merv, Samuel and Emily. She really cared about our work and often had an encouraging and wise word. Her beautiful eyes would brim with tears of laughter and joy and at other times with compassion. Kathleen asked that donations be given at her funeral and be passed onto Project Esther; so she is still looking after us and taking care of our finances.

# Single Mums' Support

I was reflecting on the Biblical story of Martha (always doing) and Mary (taking time to sit at Jesus' feet). God used this story to demonstrate the type of relationship He wants with each of us. I thought of the women in our single mums' group who are always DOING, because they have to, with little credit or thank you.

So, it was wonderful to be able to take a group of mums away on retreat to an awesome Christian oasis, Te Waioira, where they could unwind, relax, rest, sit, enjoy the moment, be prayerful, worship and take time out for themselves in the company of other women. To just BE!

Evelyn

*Thank you so much for the opportunity to be at the Single Mums' Retreat. It's really awesome to have a break. No stress and no worries for a few days is wonderful.*

*Thank you so much for arranging this special, relaxing retreat away for us single mums. It has been a great place to reflect on God's goodness in our lives. A big thank you too, to the amazing hosts. I came home refreshed.*

*A big thank you to Project Esther Single Mums' Support for including me in their invitation to attend a three day retreat at Te Wairoa in Hororata. It was great to get away from Christchurch for a few days to relax and wind down away from the everyday stresses of being a single parent who works a forty hour week. A rest from cooking and washing up was wonderful and it was an opportunity to get to know the other mothers and the Project Esther staff better.*



## Music & Movement

Music & Movement is held every Wednesday morning during school terms. There are two 45 minute sessions beginning at 9.30am and 10.15am.

*As a grandparent I have been attending Music & Movement on a Wednesday morning for the past few years. My grand-daughter and I look forward to our Wednesdays together.*

*All the staff & volunteers are welcoming and supportive. In some cases a closer relationship has evolved with the friendly team. I have formed one such friendship with Stacy who encouraged me to go to sign language class at Hagley High night school as I have two deaf grandchildren.*

*Stacy and I began sign language class together this year. I don't think I would have gone on my own so am grateful that Stacy persuaded me to go along with her. We sometimes practice together on a Wednesday after Music & Movement and it's nice to know that my grand-daughter can see someone she has always known signing too.*

*Another gracious Music & Movement helper, Jo, encouraged her daughter to fundraise for my grand-daughter's cochlear implant surgery by having a cake stall at her school. She raised over \$300 which was gratefully received and very appreciated.*

*All the staff and volunteers do an amazing job - I take my hat off to them all. It's a most welcoming Music & Movement group whose care extends far beyond a Wednesday morning!*



## Christchurch Women's Prison

### Book Club

I've been a volunteer with Daphne at Christchurch Women's Prison for a couple of years, and look forward to my fortnightly visits. Some women have not always read the whole book, but many do and allegations that the book is no good are common.

Interestingly, books about prisons, justice issues, and women's rights aren't popular. To be blunt, the loudest requests are for books with any form of escapism. The discussions, however, out of the types of book such as Celia Lashlie's "Who goes to Prison and Why?" are top-shelf and make going worthwhile.



One inmate asked Daphne "What's he here for?" whilst pointing at me.

"He's just here to carry the books" said Daphne, an explanation that seemed to make sense to all present.

Murray



## Music

This year our team teaching guitar at the Christchurch Women's Prison have had the privilege of providing an inmate with a violin.

What is it like to be able to play the violin in prison?

*Quite simply, it stirs a great mix of feelings. Firstly, it is rather weird!! But I am ever so grateful that I am even permitted to have a violin here. To be able to fill in time playing music is something I never even imagined I would be able to do, but the best part, as it is anywhere, is to be able to share it. I feel very privileged and even humbled. To be able to play in Church for the women, to be able to give them something they can feel, well, that makes it all worthwhile. Thank you to Project Esther and the Christchurch Women's Prison Management for enabling and allowing this joy.*

## Bosom Buddies

Here at Christchurch Women's Prison we are very grateful for the generous supply of bras that are donated by Project Esther – especially when they sort them to their sizes. It's not uncommon for women to be brought into prison with just the clothes they are wearing, and no spares. So it's important for them to have an extra set of underwear in order to wash and dry what they are wearing. Bosom Buddies has proved very successful in this respect, and we are most grateful for their supply and what they've done for us."

Carol - Chaplain Christchurch Women's Prison



## Te Whare Atawhai (HOUSE OF KINDNESS)

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.

*Spending time in prison is hard enough itself, as I'm sure all can imagine. However, the even scarier part begins, for a lot of women, when we walk out of the metal gates and are faced with the task of getting life back on track. The stress of this was awful and I found myself understanding why so many end up re-offending and back in prison.*

*I'm grateful to my probation officer who put me in touch with the amazing people at Project Esther. I had the support in many forms, right from the beginning, to start living a healthy and safe life - for the first time in quite a while!*

*Firstly, they provided me with accommodation; a gorgeous, warm, little flat that really did feel like my own home, where I could completely relax. They dropped off boxes of food and paid for my power bill until my finances were sorted. Even more than that though, they supported me emotionally and helped me to start thinking clearly again.*

*The Project Esther women regularly met with me for a coffee and a chat to make sure I was coping with all aspects of fitting back into society. They introduced me to people and other support networks in the neighbourhood, such as South West Baptist Church. There was always someone to pick me up and get me involved in social events, the quiz night was great fun! I was given information about courses that are available for women, so that when I was ready I could start moving forward.*

*Plus, on top of all this, I was given an opportunity to help out in a volunteer capacity. While I was finishing counselling sessions I wasn't working, so the volunteer role was a great opportunity to feel useful and keep me motivated.*

*I would not be where I am today without the amazing help and support of the Project Esther team. I hope to stay in touch with them all and would love to be able to 'pay it forward' one day.*



# The Year in Brief

This year has been full: empowering, giving, educating, referring, and learning. Here are some snippets from a few other areas where the team has been growing and providing in 2016.



Christmas 2015 parcels to Post Natal Depression Canterbury



Sign Language class



Strengthfinder training with the Project Esther team



Our Single Mums' group preparing their new veggie patch



Fundraising to support a local netball team



A fantastic turn out for the Street Party as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of South West Baptist Church



Daphne off to present her thesis about Domestic Violence in the Church Community, as part of the Women's Theology Conference at Grace College, University of Queensland.



Melinda Tankard Reist shared on, 'The Sexualisation of Children in the Media and What We Can Do About It.' We had the privilege of collaborating with Hagar Trust on this seminar.



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 WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHO HAVE MADE IT FINANCIALLY POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE DOING THE WORK WE DO

COGS

Christchurch City Council  
Lottery

David Ellison Charitable Trust

Springhill Charitable Trust & Frimley Foundation

Archer Kingdom Ministry Fund

NZ Charitable Foundation

Farina Thompson Charitable Trust

Jack & Marjorie Ferrier Charitable Trust

First Sovereign Trust Ltd

The Rata Foundation

The Lion Foundation

The Southern Trust

Anstiss-Garland Charitable Trust

Baptist Children's Trust

Tindall Foundation

Four Winds Foundation

TTCF

NZCT

The Strathlachlan Fund

Perpetual Trust

THANK YOU!