



Project Esther

CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021

"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept"
Dame Whina Cooper



WHO HAS THE POWER?

Kia ora, welcome to our Christmas newsletter 2021.

Over the year, especially in lockdown, we've had increased requests regarding family violence, the most pressing issue being the need for accommodation. As well, there are those who have additional challenges with immigration and visa issues. Some women can access the emergency benefit but it doesn't enable paying a bond easily and many don't even qualify for this benefit. It is a great hardship not to be able to work and not qualify for a benefit - especially when there are children. These women would fall into the category of our homeless statistics but they are forced to stay in unsafe relationships. This is due to the absence of realistic financial support and laboriously challenging immigration processes.

They face the misuse of power at many steps of their difficult journey, firstly due to abusive partners or husbands. Getting away is sometimes enabled, be it by police, hospital, and refuge services. But then there comes a gap, an abyss, with no access to money - where do they lay their heads and their children's heads? Often there is limited or no family and community support due to language and cultural barriers and/or common isolation tactics used by abusive partners.

It is a misuse of power to abandon such women by withholding finances for safe accommodation, and by allowing long immigration-processing timeframes. This is unjust; women and children are forced to remain in or return to abuse.

In the Christmas story we see both just and unjust uses of power. As you read on, see how our work highlights the need to use power equitably and fairly to resource the less powerful in our community.

Blessings to you and yours this Christmas and thank you for being part of us.

Daphne

HOUSE OF KINDNESS TE WHARE ATAWHAI



"I was referred by Shakti Christchurch for a short-term stay at Te Whare Atawhai.

It has been fabulous to be able to get the support from Project Esther to help me rebuild my life. The Trust has helped women and children to escape from their abusive relationships and other circumstances, and helped them to settle in. Te Whare Atawhai house is in a great location, private, comfy and I had all I needed at the house.

During my stay at the house, Project Esther Trust staff were very supportive and kind towards me. Thank you so much ladies for your love, kindness and support. Much appreciated. Blessings "

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SOCIAL WORK

Ko Ōrongomai te maunga,
Ko Waimakariri te awa,
Ko te Tiriti te iwi,
Ko Aimee Greenwood-Mackenzie tōku ingoa.
Ko Chris tōku Tane,
Ko Rylee raua ko Maddi tōku tamariki.

Kia Ora,

My name is Aimee and I am finishing up a placement at Project Esther as part of the Massey University Bachelor of Social Work. As my first placement, Project Esther will forever hold a special place in my heart as being the safe, supportive and nurturing place that welcomed me and allowed me the opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Starting in July 2021, I was fortunate to have already known the beautiful women at Project Esther through a volunteering role. But, I was still extremely anxious about being out in the world of Social Work for the first time. I needn't have worried. The Project Esther team went out of their way to ensure I felt at home and welcome. I soon felt like part of their family, which is an honour.

Included in my placement was the privilege of meeting and learning the stories of the women who come to Project Esther. I am in awe of these brave women and the courage they show through their lives and their vulnerability. More specifically, I was involved in: one-to-one meetings with wāhine, groups such as the women's Thursday group, Music and Movement, He Kete, serving the women in the Project Esther houses, correspondence with local schools and preschools, school resourcing visits, and liaising with other social service agencies.

I chose this placement because the Project Esther women are a beautiful team who sincerely care about their families and who truly want the very best for them. This makes the team very welcoming, empathetic and enjoyable to be a part of. I have done research on what makes a sustainable organisation and have found that when the organisation's team is jointly and wholeheartedly dedicated to the organisation's cause, they have a much higher chance of success and sustainability. Project Esther is the epitome of this. Who would not want to be a part of that?

Aimee



REFUGE AT HOUSE OF KINDNESS TE WHARE ATAWHAI



"I decided to leave my husband because I had concerns about the physical and emotional safety of me and my child. This decision was difficult because I didn't have time to make close friends and support in New Zealand. I also didn't have financial support as I take care of my 8-month-old baby 24/7 and I couldn't find a job."

When I made the decision I had nowhere to live with my child, even temporarily, so with the support of the Women's Refuge, we found the Esther Project, and they offered us temporary housing. It's really a very safe and comfortable place so we don't have to worry about housing for some time while we are looking for a place to live."

The Esther Project are very nice people, they are very supportive, coming to visit us every week, and they have organized many activities to support us such as budgeting, social groups and meetings for babies, and even just come to listen to how we are doing which means a lot to me."

We are really very lucky that we have a chance to meet them and stay in this beautiful place at least for a while. I had no idea that we have friends and support in New Zealand."

HE KETE

Project Esther have provided ongoing support for He Kete O te Mana Wahine (He Kete) since it opened in June 2019. He Kete is a 12-bed residential programme for women in the criminal justice system, a service run by Odyssey House. Project Esther staff come in on a regular basis to provide craft groups, guitar groups and pastoral support as required. "They have also been very generous in donating Christmas gifts and other items to the programme."

Project Esther also work alongside He Kete's aftercare workers when women leave the programme and they have supported housing needs and provided household goods and bedding.

"Project Esther are a wonderful organisation and their input is invaluable to He Kete."

RAWA PODS

"For me and my family, using the Rawa pods has been a huge blessing."

"Having just come out of jail again with nothing and not having much money on the WINZ benefit, you have to choose between something nice or a necessity, like a fridge. Being able to get nice clothes and sanitary items, things we can't afford, has been such a blessing."





CARE PACKS FOR SCHOOLS

"The hygiene supplies from Project Esther have been a huge blessing to our school community.

We have had young women displaced from homes, and parents that have lost jobs, meaning that they can't afford these basic necessities for them and their whanau.

With the support from Project Esther, these girls have been able to come to school feeling clean and not worried that other students will bully them because of poor hygiene. We are incredibly thankful for the mahi that Project Esther does in supporting our local community and all they do for others around us."

ENCOURAGING WORDS FROM OUR RESPECTED LOCAL SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

"Project Esther Trust has been a friend of Te Ara Koropiko West Spreydon School for many years. We regard them as a key community organisation to support our school whanau in times of crisis. We have had many instances when we have had to find urgent help for our tamariki when their lives have unravelled. Often things happen very quickly.

There is a hidden class in New Zealand society that grows by the day. Our most vulnerable tamariki and whanau slip below the radar until caring organisations like Project Esther shine a light on the reality. Their people are a rare breed of committed individuals who want justice and equality for the ones who are least likely to get it unless someone becomes a champion for the families in need."

Marriene Langton

FUNDS FOR THERAPY

"I have been receiving funding to help with the cost of my counselling sessions and just wanted to let you know how much this has helped both myself and my family. I found myself in a bad place earlier this year but I was extremely concerned about the cost of counselling and the extra pressure this would put on my family. My counsellor was able to get funding through Project Esther to help cover the cost and I was so grateful.

I am hugely appreciative of the support you offer people in a similar boat to myself and just wanted to say Thank you."

Kind regards



MUSIC & MOVEMENT LOVELY LINDA

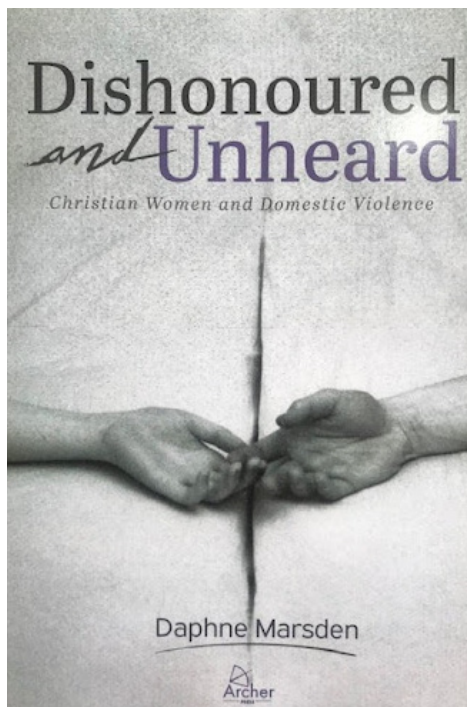


About 27 years ago Linda (Our wonderful Music Therapist) said "yes" to being Project Esther's Music and Movement facilitator. Local parents, caregivers, and children began to meet up for supportive friendships. At the same time, they were resourced to use music as a tool to foster connection and attachment with their children. Hundreds and hundreds of families over the years have had their repertoire of music for preschoolers and babies developed. They have learnt new rhymes, beats, songs, sayings, and stories which have brought joy, learning and fun into our families. It is not unusual nowadays to see parents coming who came as children themselves. We also have grandparents who, at one time, brought their children and now bring their Mokopuna.

Linda, as we say farewell to you, we are so grateful to you for your skills, your creativity, your faithfulness as you have equipped us in these important musical ways. What a gift you have been to sooooo many.

"Hello, Hello, Hello, I'm glad you came along," is how each session begins and each child's name is sung.

Linda, so many of us are glad YOU came along, what a blessing you have been to us.



CHRISTIAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Increasingly, we have women contacting us who are asking questions about their personal situations of being abused by Christian husbands. Some are wanting answers to theological questions, some are wanting support to move, or advice about managing their families.

The angst being expressed is about common issues like: children, managing credit card debt (from husband's spending), hoping for change and fear of having no support. We have women phoning, emailing, contacting on FB and through our website, calling into our offices and being referred by other services. It is a hard journey for many.



#ME TOO

In July we were invited to present at a Wānanga week for an event focusing on the #METOO movement and The Church

The #MeToo movement is highlighting past and present pervasive injustice and the need for change. Currently in Aotearoa New Zealand, The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in Care for Faith-Based settings is offering a megaphone invitation into the pain endured by victims of church related sexual abuse. There is much we can learn from the disclosures by brave and vulnerable women.

We shared some common responses to stories and ways we can improve. We highlighted common myths and attitudes which hamper sexual safety and prevention of the abuse of women and girls.

MEET TIM & LESTER

These 2 wonderful men have blessed us this year. Lester did repairs on our drop-in and offices and Tim did painting. We enjoyed their company and we are very grateful for our enhanced working spaces.



ZONTA SUPPORT

This year we have been the chosen charity for Christchurch-Canterbury Zonta support.

Zonta's mission is to raise the status of women and we have been on the receiving end of much of their generosity enabling us to pass on items such as; baking, preserves, cooked meals and knitting. Our Rawa pods have been constantly re-stocked and over winter we were given an abundance of bedding and warm jackets to pass on. We have had over 300 visits to our pods this year.

We were also able to take jackets and coats to our local school and personal products to a local secondary school after requests from school staff.

The Zonta team have also done gardening at our accommodation and installed new curtains there and in our offices. This has been made possible with support from Mackenzie and Willis. In addition to all this Zonta are fundraising on our behalf so that we can do some maintenance work on our temporary accommodation in 2022.

In October we were again chosen by Zonta to receive support and benefit from their fundraising efforts in 2022. For us this means the continuation of a warm and supportive relationship.



Clare from Zonta dropping off goods for our Rawa Pods



Getting 2021 Christmas gifts ready for Wahine in Christchurch Women's Prison

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

Baptist Children's Fund
 Christchurch Casino Charitable Trust
 Christchurch City Council
 COGS Community Organisation Grants Scheme
 David Ellison Charitable Trust
 Farina Thompson Charitable Trust
 Frimley Foundation
 Janson Charitable Trust
 Lottery Covid 19 Community Wellbeing Fund
 Lottery Grants Board
 Ministry of Social Development
 Pathway
 Rata Foundation
 Rotary Club of Christchurch
 Roy Owen Dixey Charitable Trust
 Seven Fat Cows Trust
 Sutherland Self Help Trust
 The Southern Trust
 The Tindall Foundation
 The Trusts Community Foundation
 Zonta
 AND OUR MANY KIND DONORS

THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ OUR 2021 NEWSLETTER. NOHO ORA MAI, STAY WELL.