



Project Esther

KIA ORA AND WELCOME TO OUR 2019 NEWSLETTER



As we look back over the year there is so much evidence of goodness being expressed.

‘Evidence’ is a word describing proof...the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid.

We walk and work with the evidence of women being challenged with difficult circumstances and injustice. This includes everything from family violence, to low hourly rates of pay, to sabotaged potential due to health issues, to far few resources to manage a cold winter and more.

The evidence of goodness is the kindness in passing onto Project Esther a new winter energy payment to enable a woman with fewer means to meet winter heating costs. Also beautiful knitting wool was dropped at our door to pass onto women inmates in the prison who, in turn, produce garments for their families. A whole new Whare has been provided with furniture, bedding, carpet, new locks, and security lights.

And here we are again at Christmas when we celebrate the God given gift of The One who would challenge injustice and invite participation to right wrongs. So, our Project Esther core themes remain; to connect with women, to challenge injustice and insist on fairness.

We live in a community where there is evidence of both care and of disregard. It is said that evidence demands a verdict; a verdict is a decision made after judging the facts. We make big and small decisions based on the women we journey with.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (German Resistance Theologian) said ... *“We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”* At Project Esther we seek to do both.

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

DAPHNE

STAFF CHANGES

This year our team very reluctantly said goodbye to Evelyn Kenneally, now Manager of Rowley Resource Centre, and Janelle Butcher who moved to Social Work in the local mental health field. We enjoyed our season of collegiality with both Janelle and Evelyn and are so thankful our paths still cross.

We have welcomed Haley to the team as our Social Worker. We are benefiting from her skills and expertise in housing and with families who navigate disability. Her main focus is on our Te Whare Atawhai, our WōW group and those dropping in or being referred to us



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:

The support that me and my family have received from Project Esther during the time of my separation, stroke, and diagnosis of a rare brain disease has been overwhelming.

I have also received assistance to cover counselling services. Because of this counselling I've been able to cope better and this consequently has also helped my family.

The help has eased the stress and hardship that we have been experiencing and without this help I don't know where we would be. Our gratitude for this support is huge and we will be forever thankful.

It has been a real joy to be able to have our next house ready for Wahine and children who need a temporary place to stay.

We have been able to furnish the home completely due to financial help and donations of furniture and bedding. We have also had garden help. We are thankful for all the giving.

The house is now in use and providing relief and ongoing support.

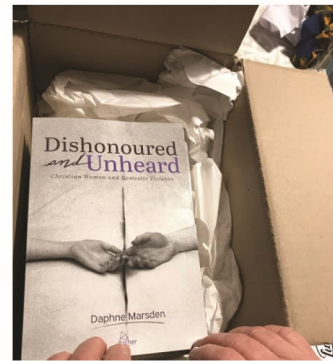


SPEAKING, WRITING, AND RESOURCING

So many plane rides!!!

I attended an International Collaboration on Faith and Violence at Acadia University Divinity College in Nova Scotia in May. The gathering was mainly social scientists and theologians. En route I was with Domestic Violence expert Julie Owens in North Carolina and visited some shelter work.

Back in NZ it was encouraging to be asked to speak at a Shiloh event at the University of Auckland focusing on gender-based violence. Academics and practitioners shared together research and information.



In Auckland again in August. I was a keynote speaker at the Chaplaincy NZ Conference teaching about Family violence and the Christian community.

September–December was spent in Cambridge on a sabbatical with a study focus on the #metoo movement and Church.

DAPHNE

From a pastor ...

I have been meeting with J off and on for the past year and walking the journey with her of separating from her husband after an abusive marriage. Her story is very raw and this will be a long journey for her.

After I received Daphne's book, Dishonoured and Unheard, I mentioned to J in one of our catch ups about the book and asked her if she had heard of it before.

J said to me that the Police had asked her to review the book for them and her response to me was that when she read it she just wept all the way through because it was a story of her life.

This reality for people like J is still very much hidden in our churches in 2019, it is my hope that this is just the beginning of exposing what is in the dark.

CHRISTCHURCH WOMEN'S PRISON

This year I started volunteering with the chaplaincy team at the Women's Prison with Project Esther - and I'm loving it!

In addition to the monthly chapel services, run by Project Esther, I go in on Monday afternoons to a wing and the self care area. We give out knitting wool, exercise books and coloured paper. These great ice breakers have been invaluable to me as I've started to get to know the women. We also do card making in the wings that have fewer privileges. We chat, mostly about what they are making or their children, but increasingly I'm hearing women's



stories and getting requests for prayer.

It's a real joy connecting with the women and most of them (:-)) really appreciate us coming in. It's a pleasure to be God's hands and feet and smile in the women's prison.

LEANNE

MUSIC & MOVEMENT

This year we celebrated with Jo (centre of the photo) who has been helping welcome families to Music & Movement for 10 years!

I got a tap on the shoulder from a friend who wondered if I could "fill in" at Music and Movement while someone was away for a few weeks. That was 10 years ago and I'm still filling in most weeks and loving every minute. Who wouldn't love holding new-born babies, dancing with ribbons and parachutes, and seeing the delight and joy on a preschooler's face as they lose themselves in the wonder and freedom of musical play?

It's a privilege to support these parents, (and often grandparents), through the highs and lows, and the pure exhaustion of life with young children. It's rewarding to witness the supportive connections across the community and the friendships that are formed by both children and adults.

I'm called a volunteer, but it's more about belonging and learning and supporting each other - as well as being fed a lot of coffee and food! I'll keep filling in for as long as I am able.



WAIORA Ō TE WAHINE (WŌW - WELLBEING OF WOMEN)

I felt very grateful and blessed to work with the group at Project Esther. From my own experience of struggling with depression and anxiety, I was prepared for the women to look on rather than participate. What I found was a willingness to give it a go, and wonderful comments about how lovely the work was that I had brought in to show them what was possible. I got as much back from the ladies as I gave in my time weaving with them.

For me, raranga (weaving with harakeke/flax) is art therapy. It also grounds me and connects me to

the environment and my whakapapa. I enjoy sharing my skills with other people and I hope they find it as healing and enjoyable as I do. In my workshops I try to help people embrace what at first seem like mistakes. It's important to me that we can use these opportunities to problem solve and make the most out of whatever the harakeke throws our way.



The Project Esther staff and women made me feel welcome and comfortable. I had such a fabulous time and I can't wait to come back.

GIARNE

From a local community leader ...
New Zealand used to be known as Godzone, South Pacific Paradise.

"Once were Warriors" took the lid off the Pandora's Box of domestic violence, poverty, neglect and protection issues for New Zealand families, and we could no longer deny that our society has problems that transcend race, religion and region.

Legislation has not improved life for the vulnerable. We have more traumatised children and mums in our school than ever before. Government organisations and NGOs are unable to cope with the volume and severity of the needs of children and women in crisis. We expect to wait 6-10 months before we can get assistance for our families and we cannot wait that long and they cannot hang on while the system grinds on.

This year, more than ever, we have called on Project Esther to come to the assistance of our families with food, clothes, counselling, safe housing, payment of bills, and assistance to find social housing. When everyone else throws their hands up in horror, Project Esther staff go out of their way to make things happen. I love how their help is delivered without judgement and with no strings attached. Mums feel like they are worth something and the children benefit hugely from the generosity of people they don't even know. I know when some of our most challenging families find the courage to ask for help, that they are desperate. There's no dignity in being poor, ashamed of personal circumstances and feeling helpless.

Project Esther gives us hope to be able to help and gives our families help to be hopeful.

Thank you to everyone on the Project Esther Team who gives their time, creativity and determination to reach out.

Blessings and thank you