



Welcome to our 2024/25 newsletter

When passing by our Ōtautahi Justice Precinct in town, I often wonder who might be in there today seeking justice. Lady Justice, and her scales is an old image personifying the measuring of weights to see which side is favoured in disputes.

In Aotearoa this year the justice scales have tipped in favour of the victims with the Royal Commission of Inquiry of Abuse in State and Faith Based Care.

We take notice as many of the wāhine we connect with are or have been in state and faith-based care. Both domains have been found wanting and called to account. They have been called to do justice.

It is also unjust that women and their families carry heavy burdens of injustice. Women are forced to navigate such things as: physical abuse at the hands of husbands and partners, living with injuries and pain, staying in refuges and motels, having their food, money and transport controlled and withheld, being unable to get medical help, lacking access to their visa information, being told their husband is in charge and the head of the home, being excluded from places, having no earning rights, being ineligible for benefits or social housing, experiencing homelessness, and being quoted sacred texts with threats about their rights and safety.

Ours is the privilege of being invited onto such journeys burdened with injustice. Our response to injustice is expressed as listening with compassion and responding practically if we can. This can include providing temporary emergency housing, food, clothing, household goods, counselling support, period products, cooking and eating together, and referring on.

At Christmas time churches make themselves very visible. The challenges for local wāhine, as well as the findings from the Royal Commission regarding faith-based care, invite us all to reflect on what we do with these issues of injustice and to ask ourselves "which side of justice making we are on?".

Welcome to our newsletter. Enjoy reading about our endeavours with justice making.

Daphne



Connecting with wāhine within Corrections

We have had the privilege of providing some pastoral care to the wāhine at He Kete te Oranga o te Mana Wahine each fortnight this year. The wāhine are working through a post-prison 16-week Alcohol and Drug residential rehabilitation programme and it's a real pleasure to be part of their journey. Because the wāhine are in a therapeutic environment their reflections are often hard-won and insightful. We often come away from our time together with fresh insights ourselves into grace, faith, and struggle.

Some of the wāhine then move into a supported accommodation and reintegration service, Te Whare Waimairiiri. As part of their programme, they visit us at our offices each fortnight. Here we hang out, cook and then eat dinner together. This meeting together over kai, where we share the highs and lows of our week, brings us together as wāhine. A couple of the wāhine from Te Whare have also helped us out with some gardening and cooking soup for another one of our weekly groups.

Conversations with Young People

This year we have had different opportunities to speak with young people about healthy and unhealthy relationships. We've been able to share some of the stories we encounter in our work and answer a wide range of questions.

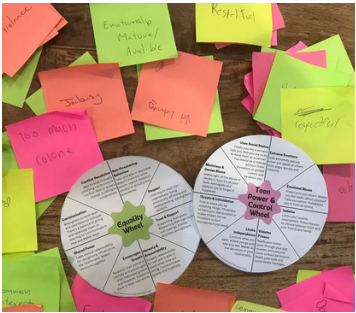
Learning about healthy relationships is so important for young people. Abusive and controlling relationships can start young. The statistics paint a sad picture of this. Compared with other New Zealanders, adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 have the highest rates of intimate partner violence (NZFVC, 2017). 21% per cent of women who stayed in the refuge were also under 20 (15- 19 years) (NZFVC, 2017).

Snapshot of the Year

Over the past 12 months Project Esther has done the following:

- Provided 19 counselling sessions for women. All sessions this year were paid in full, not subsidised.
- Had 753 visits to the Rawa Pods
- Added credit to the power bills of 24 wāhine
- Provided housing for 21 people
- Through our partnership with the Period Place, we have distributed 1100 packs of menstrual care items and 50 pairs of period underwear
- Packed 170 Christmas care packs for women within Corrections
- Provided more than 160 wāhine and rangatahi with personal care packs
- Packed 450 card packs for women within Corrections
- 8 back-to-school filled backpacks thanks to the Christchurch Aunties

One of the tools that we have used is the Power and Control wheel and the Equality Wheel. The Power and Control wheel gives language to what abuse looks like beyond just physical abuse. The Equality Wheel looks at the markers of healthy relationships. These tools have sparked many conversations from young people and adults alike.

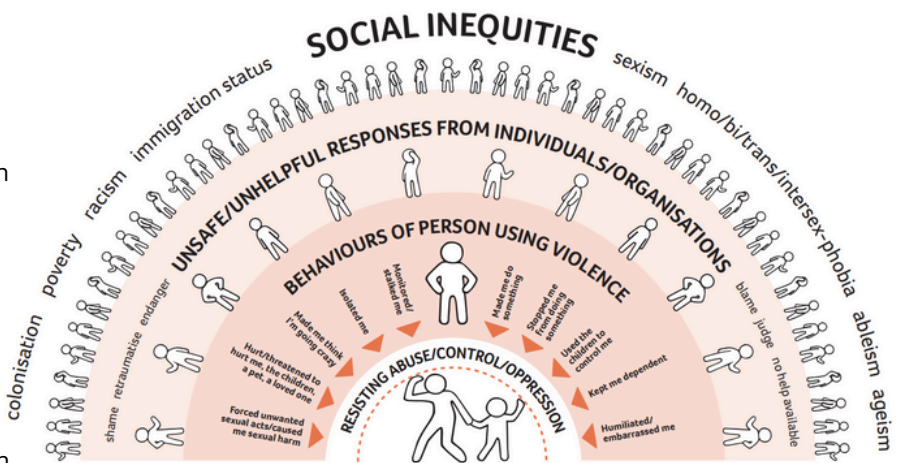


Visit to Christchurch Boys High School

Reflections on our Practice

Like all of us, the women that we journey alongside, have lives which are filled with complex, intersecting dynamics. This is particularly true for the wāhine we encounter who have experienced family violence. Earlier this year, I attended a training on Family Violence through Shine, an organisation who specialise in this field. They introduced me to the Entrapment Model, which touches on the various elements in women's lives, which can lead them to be entrapped by the systems, organisations, as well as the people, impacting them.

At Project Esther, we see the impact of this entrapment on women, and their children. When we are able to take into account the wider issues that are contributing to the oppression of people, we can try to mitigate them and support women more holistically.



Originated from Ptacek, J., *Battered Women in the Courtroom: The Power of Judicial Responses*, Northwestern University Press, 1999. Copyright © Shine 2022 www.2shine.org.nz/about-us/resources/

It is helpful for us to consider these aspects, and also reflect on how we as an organisation, and our response, can be empowering for women, rather than contribute to the entrapment. This was a valuable learning from this year, and one I look forward to continuing to implement into my social work practice.
Hannah (Social Worker)

Reflections on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care was released this year. It was established to investigate the abuse of tamariki, rangatahi and adults within state and faith-based care in Aotearoa New Zealand between the years 1950-99. Daphne, on behalf of Project Esther, attended and presented at the *"Sexual Abuse in the Church: Honest Conversations"* Conference in Auckland earlier this year. This conference was a chance to learn, share and reflect upon this report. She shares about her time there:

At the conference various topics were covered by speakers. These included: an overview of the Commission Interim Report, responses from the Methodist and Anglican Churches, trauma, care, findings from the *Identify Survey*, and the sharing of a toolkit for churches accompanying survivors.

As we listen and take note of the stories in the *Royal Commission of Inquiry - Abuse in Care*, churches in Aotearoa New Zealand are invited to ask some questions about Christian male power and entitlement, about the value of women and girls and children, and about sexual violence. There is evidence in their stories of myths, theological beliefs, church systems, and practices which have enabled abuse, attributed blame, and silenced women and children as victims. Church communities are being invited to ask deeper questions about the nature of leadership, its valued theories, structures, and practices, about who has rights, or power, and its vulnerabilities around the potential to engage in exploitation of the weakness or vulnerability of others. As writer Ruth Everhart puts it: "The price of patriarchy is sexual abuse, and people who love Jesus should no longer be willing that anyone should pay that price. The church has been too slow to connect the assumptions of patriarchy with the realities of sexual abuse."

Trauma and recovery author Judith Herman, says: "It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement and remembering."

Partnership with The Period Place

Project Esther is one of The Period Place's Impact Partners. This means that we receive period products that we can distribute to our communities free of any cost.



The Period Place is the largest menstrual justice charity in Aotearoa who are working towards period equity. At Project Esther, we hear stories of women who have had to make hard decisions between buying food or buying period products. The inability to access period products can lead to missed days at work or school, which can have subsequent impacts on educational performance and economic opportunities. It can also impact health, dignity and overall well-being.

Our Rawa Pods are constantly stocked with period products that women can help themselves to. This year, we also have been donated reusable period underwear. One woman who picked these up for her girls said: "Thank you for helping and making life easier for my girls".

Waiora o ngā wāhine

WOW runs weekly, facilitated by Leanne & Liz. It exists to be a place of mutual care, respect, support, and great food! We have been able to support group members both pastorally and practically throughout the year and it has been a real pleasure being part of the relationship building within the group each week.

This year this group will be putting together 170 Christmas packs. These go to wāhine within the corrections system. They are full of hygiene products, pamper items, and chocolate treats.

Email newsletter?

If you have received a paper copy but would prefer to receive it via email, please let us know by emailing info@projectesther.co.nz

Te Whare Atawhai

Te Whare Atawhai - House of Kindness is our short term accommodation. This is a story from a resident from this year.

"I came to New Zealand with my ex-husband and my kids.

I was taught that man are the head of the family and that women need to be submissive. I practiced this with my husband all my marriage even though I knew that his behavior was not normal but controlling and abusive.

When we came to New Zealand, he took advantage of the fact that here I was going to be alone with no family. Little by little he took away from me all the basic needs like the wifi password, the keys of the family car, toilet paper and even food.

I was on a partnership visa and that was another reason why I couldn't do much. He knew about this, and he didn't want to apply for residency as he knew I was going to leave him. We finally got the residency, and I was so lucky enough to find Project Esther, which provided me and my kids a house to leave this abusive relationship.

This house was a real miracle for us, my kids were so happy to be here in this house. I truly thanks to all the people from Project Esther who were so kind and warm-hearted, always there to support me and my children with everything I could need from food, counseling, stationary for school and even swimming lessons for my kids."

Highlights from 2024



Project Esther was delighted to have Akira from Te Whatu Ora come along to host Diversity Training. It was informative, engaging and gave us space to consider how we can grow as an organisation.



Thanks to the wonderful volunteers from Good Bitches Baking. Each week they stop by with some delicious baked goods. We pass these along to wāhine in our houses or in the local community.



We're very grateful for the support of the Papanui Networkers this year. They organised different events to raise funds and provide necessary items for our Rawa Pods.



A generous load of toiletries and homeware goods donated from Fleur McDonald Legal. They hosted a staff quiz night and had one of us along to speak to them about our mahi. We are fortunate to have support like this.



Our office doesn't often see so many men in it all at one time! Our kitchen had a makeover this year to make more space for groups. Thanks to these volunteers (plus more) for making it happen.



We were fortunate to spend time with Irene and others from Te Rūnanga o Ngā Waka. They have many incredible services and programmes supporting individuals and whānau.



We have had a busy time with our temporary accommodation. We've had many move in and then move on. Here Grace signs in one of the new tenants.



This year 450 card packs were made up for Christchurch Women's Prison. This gave the women the supplies to make their own cards for different holidays which they could then send to family/friends.

We are so grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside and connect with the following organisations and groups this year:

Aviva
Christchurch Aunties
Christchurch Methodist Mission
Christchurch Resettlement Services
Christchurch Women's Prison Chaplaincy
Cross Over Trust
Good Bitches Baking
He Kete o Oranga o Te Mana Wahine
He Waka Tapu
Kingdom Resources
Living Wage Movement
My Favourite Things
Odyssey House Te Whare Waimairiiri
Pathway Trust
Papanui Networkers

Rowley Community Centre
Shakti Ethnic Women's Refuge
SHE
Te Ara Koropiko West Spreydon School
Te Kura Tuarua o Horomaka Hillmorton High School
Te Puawaitanga ki Ōtautahi Trust
Te Puna Aroha
Te Whare Hauora
Te Whare Rama Early Learning Centres
Techmate
The Loft Christchurch
The Period Place
Visionwest Community Housing
West Christchurch Women's Refuge

Thank you for taking the time to read our Christmas newsletter. We hope that this season is full of the gifts of joy, peace and love.



From the team at
Project Esther

