

# KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice



## Peace

### a plan arising for 2019 - 2025 from a mission discernment process

From March to July of 2017, thirty Knox members attended five mission discernment forums. The group's work was presented to Knox Church Council early in 2018. Matters of publicity, signage, broadcasting and branding were taken up by Council, with the rest being directed back (with thanks and admiration) to the discernment group (where it was perceived by Council that the missional energy existed) for further sifting and prioritising.

Following a discernment group meeting in September 2018, a meeting with Rev Darryl Tempero (Presbytery's Mission Resource Minister), and a permission-giving approach being approved by Council (September 2018), this document was produced. It sets out Knox's missional calling strategy for the next six years (2018-2024).

Council adopted this document in October 2018 and commends its adoption by the congregation.

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## Our foundation, recent experience, and current situation

Knox Church was established by St Paul's Church, Christchurch Central, in the 1870s, as a response to the burgeoning of an unchurched area of the city called "the North Belt", centred around Bealey Avenue. For a long time Knox served the North Belt as a neighbourhood church, until increasing mobility gave North Belt people and others opportunities to come and go to non-local churches. Fairly early on, Knox expressed a liberal theological stance, and latterly followed up with a socially progressive, establishment-protesting approach which attracted some and propelled others to other places of worship. Progressive people from beyond the immediate neighbourhood soon became the bulk of Knox's congregation. Knox became a "thinking" church, enjoying theological reflection and ordered, intelligent liturgy with good music.

A recent audit of our mission statement revealed that we are strongly committed to the principles of inclusiveness, diversity, and "honest, respectful conversation, conducted safely". We wish to own and promote these principles unapologetically, so that they are obvious to all.

When the Knox Church building was almost totally destroyed in a series of earthquakes, the people of Knox contemplated "shutting up shop". Quickly, it was decided that Knox's inclusive ethos and physical presence in this part of Christchurch were important, and worthy of preserving.

## How we see God

An all-comers group was invited to consider, within a traditional Trinitarian framework, who God is to us at Knox. We used a diverse series of pictures to stimulate our thought. Selected from the many, the following is our Holy Trinity.

<p><b>Father / Creator</b></p>  <p>A material-respecting God who works creatively with humanity to fashion beauty and utility.</p>	<p><b>Son / Redeemer</b></p>  <p>Christ as a brown-skinned, real human being, living on street-level, keenly scrutinising our world from within, comfortable in skin but maybe vulnerable / sensitive.</p>	<p><b>Holy Spirit / Giver of Life</b></p>  <p>The Spirit as an unbidden, constantly moving, gentle but strong creative force, invisible but affective, re-creative. A Maker of positive difference.</p>
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## The Work of this God

When this God gets involved with humanity, the following sorts of things happen:

- *people are given an identity*
- *people are nurtured*
- *promises are made and kept*
- *people respond to the promises by journeying together in faith*
- *demanding human experiences like exodus and exile are reflected on constructively, such that a celebratory, hopeful way of life comes forth*
- *the teachings of Jesus are valued*
- *conflicted, divided humanity grows into a new, inclusive community of love*
- *love takes central place*

## Our Ambition for God's World

When we dream of the New Creation, the world as we hope and believe it one day will be through full engagement with the fuller purposes of God, we think of the following sorts of things:

- **Respect for others** - people differing in various ways but being full of goodwill towards others and supportive of diversity.
- **Rejection of violence, embracing of peace** - people of all faiths and degrees of faith rejecting extremism and intolerance - people settling conflicts peaceably and fairly.
- **Sensitivity to need** - openness to the needs of others and willing to share and to help each other.
- **A culture of generosity and sharing** - no excessive greed, ego, accumulation of resources and power.
- **Loving and responsible husbandry of creation** - careful use of our natural world so as to conserve its integrity and the intricate systems which support human and all other life.
- **The nurturing of human potential** - everyone able to develop their talents and abilities to the full and use them to support the community as well as themselves.
- **Opportunities for reflective gratitude** - Knox as a tree under which guests and locals would come to sit and reflect and engage and wonder together about the things that give value to life.

## Our principles and bottom lines for serving this ambition

With the vision of the New Creation before us, joyfully affirming our role as God's co-creators, we want to make a **positive difference** in the world. In seeking to make a positive difference, we affirm:

- *the importance of respect and listening*

- *sensitivity to where people are emotionally and spiritually*
- *a willingness to work for the wholeness of others – for their sake*
- *acknowledgement that God is present and working outside the institution of the Church as well as in it - mission conversations must always be two-way*

**We affirm the mission paradigm presented in Acts 17**, the case of Paul's interaction with the people of Athens, in which both Church and non-Church enabled each other to transition from arrogance and insult to mutual cordial, productive dialogue and discovery.

**Our working definition of mission, based on Luke 10** (the Sending of the Seventy), understands mission as:

- Jesus initiated,
- disciple manifest,
- purposeful movement out into a community (where Jesus intends to go)
- for the sake of peace, community, blessing,
- sustained by welcome and love of others – fueled by good will
- demonstrative of the closeness of God

**In mission work, we reject:**

- emotional or spiritual manipulation
- the use of fear or threat

**In offering ourselves as co-creators, committed to positive difference, we acknowledge:**

- that although we have grown in spirit through the testing of our capacities, we often do our best, most sustainable work when working to our natural strengths,
- that we have derived great strength and joy from helping others make major life transitions
- that we have enjoyed our faith when we have been surrounded by good people and conversation that was thoughtful and stimulating
- that we have deepened friendships through political activism
- that we want to stand tall in the identity that God has given us, being humbly proud of who we are
- that we expect to grow as people through meaningful mission activity.

## **Peace: where our mission attention is falling**

In an intentional seeing exercise, focussed mainly on our local neighbourhood, we discovered that our major concerns could easily be brought under the umbrella of the theme of “peace“ - peace from the noise of our neighbourhood to the brokenness of the wider world. We have chosen “peace” as the theme under which we will re-frame our current work and form our emerging mission work.

## **A responsible, sustainable incremental adoption policy**

Aware that there is always a lot to do, but that it is good to walk before running, we seek a modest beginning for our next chapter - making a positive difference in the pursuit of peace. Aware also of the special situation faced by people of faith in a post-disaster circumstance, Knox approves a policy of responsible, sustainable incremental adoption. We will work at a measured pace and choose projects carefully only for which we have energy.

Following our having declared our house as a place of peace, and ourselves as a people of peace (with all appropriate publicity), we will adopt up to two peace projects a year for the next five years.

At the end of the five years, we will review how the peace theme has served us, God and others.

### **Establishment Phase**

#### **During Advent of 2018**

the theme for worship will be “peace”.

#### **During February of 2019,**

there will be four services and studies on peace (what it is, what it isn't, what it requires and means).

- Shalom (3 February)
- War - and its absence (10 February)
- Spiritual practices for inner peace (17 February)
- What a community of peace needs to consider as its standard on the ground - what does it mean to be a people of peace (24 February) - final confirmation of the first project options and consideration of second-wave projects.

**On 3 March 2019**, at a special service, Knox will declare itself a place of peace, inhabited by a people of peace, for the purposes of peace (press releases and signage).

**By 5 May 2019**, Knox will release news of two projects it will support during 2019 in the pursuit of peace.

## Implementation Phase

**In 2019,**

the first two projects, chosen by the mission group, will come from the following:

<b>Peace bell</b>	7 votes	The Canterbury Interfaith Organization meets annually at the Peace Bell in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens for prayers for peace, offered from various religious traditions. Following thorough conversations about its input to the occasions, Knox pledges to attend Peace Bell gatherings in good numbers from 2019-2024 with clear signage, explanations of why we stand for peace, and brings appropriate prayers to fit into the occasion.
<b>Open church</b>	4 votes	Have one afternoon a week / fortnight / month, when we are open and quiet, peace candles (“open day” experience) - be clear that this is about offering peace.
<b>Peace concert</b>	4 votes	To organize with our music team a peace concert, featuring a “peace work”- with all appropriate advertising being done such that the event is clearly presented as a ministry to peace.
<b>Sermon booklet</b>	4 votes	That a booklet of peace themed sermons be produced for free and broad circulation.

Each year in June, we will review the two projects we have adopted. In the light of our “work of God” criteria, we will determine whether to continue, discontinue or modify them. We will then choose one or two projects from the list (that may have been augmented in the Spirit by then).

**In 2020,**

any left over ideas from 2019 will be reconsidered alongside options from the next bracket of project ideas, two projects being chosen

<b>Iona Peace liturgy</b>	2 votes	Have an Iona Peace liturgy / communion once a week / fortnight / month - explore connections with the Iona spiritual rule of prayer and action
<b>Cunningham bequest</b>	2 votes	Focus Knox’s annual Cunningham Bequest donation on peace, and make press releases about it
<b>Interfaith workshop and road show</b>	2 votes	Hold an Inter-faith workshop where to / three / four faith traditions talk about the place of peace in their tradition, their contribution to world peace, various practices for gaining inner peace - maybe turn it into something that could be offered

		to schools that are not interested in Bible in Schools but open to faith-collaborative / comparative ventures for good purpose
<b>Talk to Peace Organizations</b>	2 votes	Talk to Peace organizations and see what grows. (Green Peace? Amnesty International? NZ Defense Force [around the corner - or Rev. Chris Purdie]?)
<b>Secondary schools' peace speech comp</b>	2 votes	Secondary Schools peace speech competition / collaboration - speeches about what our school has done to resist bullying / facilitate reconciliation.

**In 2021,**

any left over ideas from 2019/2020 will be reconsidered alongside options from the next bracket of project ideas, two projects being chosen

<b>Hero of peace lecture</b>	1 vote	Annual? Hero of peace lecture - with particular emphasis on more secular candidates - e.g. Ghandi? Talk on the most recent laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize.
<b>Art competition / bequest</b>	1 vote	Hold art competition (visual arts / hymns / poems / short stories) on peace theme
<b>Peace and reconciliation theme and forum</b>	1 vote	Maybe have some peace theme each year (for particular focus at a public forum): peace between treaty partners, peace between nations, peace between generations, peace between haves and have-nots, peace between victim and perpetrator, peace between liberal and conservative, industry and environment . . .
<b>Neighbourhood declaration of peace</b>	1 vote	Challenge our neighbours to talk to us about peace in the city - encourage the production of some "commitment to peace in the neighbourhood" to which church and non-church could commit. We are a neighbourhood committed to peace for our world. What are the essentials of peacemaking to which people of faith/s or no-faith could agree
<b>Peace maker in residence</b>	1 vote	We had ideas about an artist or theologian in residence. How about a peacemaker in residence? Or sponsoring a post grad student at Otago Peace and Conflict Department?
<b>Talk to Durham Street</b>	1 vote	Durham Street will leave us soon - do they want to be our neighbours in this on-going journey?
<b>Offer an office upstairs to a partner</b>	1 vote	Offer one of the empty upstairs rooms as the peace office - invite people to apply for twelve month occupation of it - after conversation with applicants re. what they

		would use it for.
<b>Ask each sub-committee to re-frame for peace</b>	1 vote	Ask each sub-committee of Knox Council (and Council itself) to issue a brief statement of how their commitment to peace informs its work. Perhaps a statement from the “Prayers for others” people, door team people, Singers, about their commitment to work for peace.

**In 2022,**

any left over ideas from 2019 - 2021 will be reconsidered alongside options from the next bracket of project ideas, two projects being chosen

<b>Peace Awards</b>	0 votes	Have annual peace award - simple press release or full-blown event (is this something we should do in association with Presbytery? Sign of wider solidarity, connection, shared concern?)
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**In 2023,**

any left over ideas from 2019 - 2022 will be reconsidered alongside options from on-going discernment, two projects being chosen

**In 2024,**

any left over ideas from 2019 - 2023 will be reconsidered alongside options from on-going discernment, two projects being chosen

**In 2025,**

a full review will determine how peace has served as a mission theme and whether any alternative theme commends itself for the next stage of Knox’s life.

**Learning along the Way**

As we become more engaged with matters of peace, and more experienced, we may have new ideas about projects that never occurred to us during our early discernment phase. New projects might well find a place among the options we consider each year. We have, after all, in our description of the Spirit said “The Spirit [is] an unbidden, constantly moving, gentle but strong creative force, invisible but affective, re-creative.” We will learn, grow and discover new things.

The Council of Knox Church approved the strategy contained in this document, and asked that it be circulated to the Knox community for adoption by the congregation. This document will be circulated with the November 2018 edition of “Knox Life”, and a congregational meeting will be held after the morning service on Sunday 3 February 2019.