

Growing in Grace

Newsletter of Grace Presbyterian Church
of New Zealand

March 2005

Volume 2, Issue 1

Happy Cripples by Geoff Macpherson

Eat Yourself Happy?

I can't seem to forget the billboard. Every time I drove through Manurewa, there it was at the side of the road, with the giant face of a man with a ludicrous smile. Across the top was the statement: "Eat Yourself Happy."

Each time I drove past I pondered the meaning of this piece of fast food advertising. Would eating hamburgers from a particular joint leave me with a feeling of peace and contentment? Would burgers by other global franchises have the same effect? What about a burger from the local fish and chip shop? Would my daily dose of porridge work just as well?

Obviously the idea of using food to induce any sense of lasting happiness is stupid – yet the worrying rise of obesity in NZ is proof that too many of us do derive happiness, albeit fleeting, from food. We also use alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, sport and

any number of other pursuits to try and find happiness.

Who is Truly Happy?

Jesus gives us the answer in what we call the 'Beatitudes' (Matthew 5:1-12). Matthew tells us that on one occasion when Jesus sat on 'the mountainside' (5:1) His disciples "came to Him, and He began to teach them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...'" The term 'blessed' that Jesus used might well be termed 'happy.' Here at the commencement of his public ministry, he was pronouncing the Divine *Shalom* upon a certain kind of person – those who were citizens of his kingdom and who had the smile of God upon them. They were not

people who had 'earned' God's favour through their actions, but people who through the grace of God had been brought into a state of utter dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. In their dependence upon him rather than their self-achievement, they had found safety and happiness.

Perhaps you have had someone say to you when you have been sharing the gospel with them, 'Christianity is just a crutch for people who can't make it through life on their own'? Well, they

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A new GPCNZ church begins—see p 5

are right – with two minor corrections: ‘CHRIST is a crutch for people who KNOW that they can’t make it through life on their own’! Yes, truly happy people are cripples who have found all they need in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Happy People Look Like

What do these *happy cripples* that Jesus is describing look like? They are spiritual bankrupts (v.3), who are mourning over their sins (4). They view themselves through the ‘reality glasses’ of Scripture, which results in meekness and humility (5). In a world bloated on all kinds of deathly junk food, the kingdom citizen hungers and thirsts after Christ’s righteousness (6).

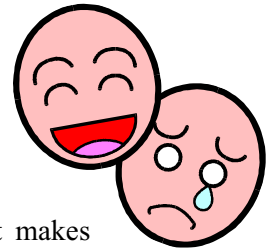
The character of the happy person is

further defined by their willingness to operate by grace rather than the letter of the law (7). In a day of sordid secrets, they are distinguished by their purity and innocence (8). When the best that rulers and officials can do is send in the peacekeepers, these blessed ones bring the Prince of peace to earth through the gospel (9).

Finally, the really happy are those who have the inner capacity of grace that makes them loyal to Christ, even to the point of death (10). When they are insulted, persecuted and slandered for Christ, then their happiness rises to rejoicing, because they are counted with the godly prophets of old (11,12).

Are you Happy?

Ask yourself today, “Am I happy?” If so, go on and ask a second question, namely, “What is it that makes



me happy?” Test yourself. How much wealth is accumulated in your spiritual bank account? Does your sin make you weep? Do you accept others reminding you of your sins? What is it that satisfies your hunger and quenches your thirst? Know this for sure: anything but the Lord Jesus Christ will never bring happiness – a happiness that is actually God’s smile of blessing on your life.

◇ Geoff Macpherson
Pastor, EPC Christchurch

A Question of Authority by Peter van der Brink

I’m a YEC, a Young Earth Creationist. I believe that the world is about 6000 years old, that God created it in six literal, 24-hour days, and that the flood in Noah’s day literally covered the entire planet. I believe that this is taught in the Bible.

This position, however, flies directly in the face of widely accepted ‘secular’ beliefs about the history of the world – usually described in billions of years. So how can I claim that so many learned people are wrong without being either ignorant or arrogant? The answer lies in who or what I credit with having final authority – who it is that determines what I believe to be true. For the Christian, it is God speaking in his

Word, the Bible, not the accumulated wisdom of men.



My convictions on this point were recently tested and reinforced when I was reading Jonathan Sarfati’s *Refuting Compromise*, a book that seeks to refute the ‘progressive creationist’ position of Hugh Ross. It’s a technical book in places, but gives an excellent overview of many of the central issues considered important by so-called ‘Young-Earth Creationists.’ Sarfati carefully and methodically demonstrates the integrity of the YEC position and the shortcomings of Ross’s compromising attempt to marry ‘secular’ science with the Biblical accounts of history.

It occurred to me at one point to check up on the internet for rebuttals to the book. Sure enough, I found one (there are undoubtedly more) and carefully read the sections relating to what I had read up to that point. I found this quite disheartening because it began to cast doubts on the arguments that I had read in Sarfati’s book. I read on,

however, and found a hyperlink to testimonies of several people who had abandoned a YEC position in favour of an old-earth one. I followed the link and read the ‘enlightened’ if somewhat bitter testimonies of several highly qualified and intelligent people now vehemently opposed to YEC.

I began to analyse what it was that these people claimed motivated them at one time to accept, then later, to reject the young-earth position, the position that seems so clearly biblical to me. Were they truly objective searchers who carefully weighed all the evidence for and against something before finally coming to a conclusion that is unsailable in both assumption and reason? Surely if these intelligent people saw good reason to abandon their beliefs on the basis of thorough objective investigation then it must just be a matter of stubbornness or ignorance on the part of people like Jonathan Sarfati and myself to con-

tinue to hold YEC as scientifically feasible?

As I re-read the testimonies of these ex-YEC's I came to the conclusion, however, that it is *not* stubbornness or ignorance that keeps me holding to a YEC position. I saw that the central issue in the debate is one of **authority**.

When I read the testimonies again, I saw clearly that these YECs had once all had the same authority source for interpreting the age of the earth. They had relied on the teaching of other Young Earthers as authoritative and looked to them to provide answers to scientific problems. This worked as long as their

teachers were convincing. But being human and having limited knowledge, that couldn't always be the case. And when evidence appeared that seemed to contradict what they had been taught, these ex-YECs changed sides. When one of them, for example, came across evidence for geological features that did not seem consistent with what his YEC teachers taught, he eventually abandoned both them *and their viewpoint* altogether. When his foundational authority was shown to be in error, he (quite reasonably) rejected it. His mistake, I believe, was to rely on his fellow YECs rather than the Bible for the age of the earth.

This is the real issue – the source of

our authority. I'm not saying we aren't allowed to ask serious questions about issues such as the age of the earth. It is helpful and challenging to do so. What I am saying is that we must be careful not to usurp God's authority by replacing it with human ideas. That counts in every area of life – science, politics, ethics, medicine etc. God invites us to investigate his creation, to master and 'subdue' it. But where he has spoken, clearly explaining something, as his creatures, we are bound to accept his Word – and even more so if we have confessed his only Son Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

YBC Report by Louise Kennedy

Youth Bible Conference was held this year at Camp Morley, Clarks Beach from December 28th 2004-January 3rd 2005. There were two main speakers, both from Covenant Presbyterian Church, Manurewa. Peter Boyd, Senior Pastor of Covenant was the main speaker. He delivered eight messages during the conference. Through these eight messages, Peter explored our spiritual need as sinful 'lepers', Christ's decision and the cost of this decision worked out in his suffering on the cross, his faithfulness in the light of our denials and unfaithfulness, and our response to this faithfulness in terms of servanthood and heart devotion. His messages were both challenging and encouraging. They gave a real picture of what it means to be in Christ and challenged us to respond to Christ's love with an attitude of devotion

and thankfulness.

Hamish MacDonald, currently studying for the ministry at Grace Theological College, was our second speaker. His messages tied in well with Peter's. He spoke of our need for spiritual renewal and change, the priority for this change, the power we have to change through the Holy Spirit, and the way we should approach this spiritual change.

Studying God's Word was central to our time together, but it wasn't the only thing we did. There were

plenty of outdoor activities in the afternoons and games in the evenings as well, including an ice-cream night and a water sports afternoon. The food was fabulous and in "bounteous supply". No one could complain of going hungry! Numbers of campers fluctuated throughout the five days, with between 65-75 overall. It was a time of spiritual refreshment for all who came.

YBC is such a great opportunity for like-minded young people from all over NZ to get together for fellowship and spiritual growth. It is always encouraging to see so many young people with the desire to deepen their knowledge and love of Christ and their relationship with him. If you are in fifth form this year or older we want to see you at the next YBC! You will be changed, challenged and encouraged.



Attendees at YBC 2004/5

“Uncle Wallace”

Extracts From Grant Bullin’s Eulogy to Wallace Hall

Most knew Wallace Hall as “Uncle Wallace”. This gracious, unassuming, quiet man had a huge impact on thousands of lives if not tens of thousands. He wasn’t noticed a lot, but he was always there, faithful and loyal in everything he took on. When you think about it, he was a unique man who stood out from the ordinary run of people.

After assisting in a boy’s camp at Pukerau in 1974, Christian camping became a consuming passion for Wallace. Early in 1980 he sold his farm and moved to Nore Street in Waiholo so he could, in his own words, “give greater attention and be more involved in the work of CYC”. He became a voluntary worker for CYC, not wanting to be a burden on this charitable organisation. Through the years that followed he never asked for or accepted any form of remuneration. Instead with the proceeds of the farm, he looked for a suitable investment that would provide him an income to live on.

Wallace had a great love for children. He loved to talk to children and get alongside them. He loved to encourage and teach them life skills, and most of all, teach them about the Lord Jesus. Often he would speak to school groups that came through the Camp. Many a time I would see teachers shaking their heads in disbelief as this old funnily dressed man, with no mod cons or visual aids, would have children sitting at his feet, gradually being drawn into the story, and hanging on every word that spoke.

Wallace was involved with CYC for 30 years, for twenty-five of those years he was on the “Council of Management,” and for about 10 of these he was the Society’s Treasurer. He handled camp registrations and managed our bookshop for a number of years. As well as these duties he led numerous camps and cycle tours. He also assisted with many, many more. Wallace continued his involvement into this his 74th year. He had even written the talks for the coming summer boys camp to be held this January and distributed them at a meeting on Saturday the day before his death.

Christian Youth Camp wouldn’t be what it is today without Wallace’s exceptional skills, dedication and tireless effort. This faithful gracious unassuming man will be sadly missed but we are also excited to know that he is now with the Lord for eternity.

Late in 1999 he wrote these words: “As I look back over the years I am filled with a sense of how the Lord has led me, and know he will continue to do so, until that day when he calls me home. And I know that the future with him will be far more glorious than anything I have experienced here. Let all the praise and glory be to HIM ALONE!”



Don’t forget Africa

More than a year after leaving Kenya Don and Dawn Wallace still find themselves drawn daily to pray for the great needs of the people of Africa. They also thrill at every remembrance of the warm and sincere spirituality of the Christians they met there. “We long,” they write, “that the warmth of their greetings

and the reality of their living faith may ‘rub off’ on us in our country of complacency and affluence, filling us with zeal and joy for the out-working of the truths we know to be vital to our spiritual growth.”

It’s easy to forget the great needs of Africa, they comment, in the light of

all the attention given to the recent calamitous Tsunami. Terrible though the Tsunami has been, millions of Africans – many of them our brothers and sisters in Christ – have suffered extreme poverty, hardship and peril through decades



of civil war. This is particularly true of the people of South Sudan.

Through recent communication with officials from the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS), the Wallaces have learned of some of the special needs facing Christians in South Sudan. Since the recent signing of a long-awaited peace agreement with the north, new problems have developed. Thousands upon thousands of refugees want to return to their homes in the south (there are 85,000 refugees in one refugee camp in Kakuma, south of Lokichoggio in North Kenya alone), but have nothing to return to. The Rev. Both Reath Luang, Assistant Vice-Moderator of the PCOS writes, "The peace agreement has finally

been signed. Lives of people will be changed. Resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction/construction are all challenges facing us. This year will be a busy one. People already returning are all in need of shelter, bedding, and tools to rebuild their lives. These and other church programmes will be discussed at our meeting in Thornytor. This period is very challenging and needs our prayers and guidance from above."

Don and Dawn ask us to pray for leaders of the PCOS as they meet for their General Assembly in Thornytor in late March/early April to discuss these and other pressing challenges. They also call us to pray for the Thornytor Bible Training

College, a college for training pastors that meets in "extremely primitive conditions and has great need of better facilities, a library of some sort, and books for study." In spite of the enormous hardships and disadvantages that both teachers and students face, this college is nevertheless providing an excellent training for men – in Ian McIver's view, equivalent to that of a four year course in Australia.

But more than prayer is needed. The believers in Africa need our financial assistance as well. For more information on specific projects for support, both in the Sudan and in North Kenya, contact Don and Dawn at dnkdw@xtra.co.nz

A Seed bears Fruit A New Church Comes Into Being

More was going on at the July General Assembly of GPCNZ than met the eye. The Lord was at work in the hearts of many of the commissioners and observers, challenging them to press on with the task of church planting in New Zealand.

One whose heart was being spoken to was Andrew Young, Principal of Grace Theological College. He sensed the Lord calling him to offer his preaching gifts to help further the work of church planting in the Auckland area.

That sense of call proved to be the seed of the newest mission church in the denomination, Redeemer Grace Presbyterian Church. After weeks of meetings and planning the new church was constituted on November 25th and began public worship services on February 6th 2005.

Redeemer is targeting a new suburban development close to Manurewa called Flat Bush. Over the next ten years town planners are ex-

pecting some 40-50,000 people will settle in the new homes and apartments being built in this area. An entire new town centre – Flat Bush Village – is planned, and along with that, five new schools, rest homes, and a number of smaller shopping centres. Several other churches have seeded new congregations in this area, but there is still plenty of room for a GPCNZ church plant.

Redeemer has already taken its first steps toward reaching the area. It has rented a "Ministry House" in the Chapel Park suburb and plans to use this for home-based outreach ministries in the community. Plans are afoot for homework and ESOL ministries based at the House, to be followed by men's and women's ministries, and hopefully also a "Mainly Music" outreach to preschoolers and their parents (and grandparents!).

To date the biggest challenge has been finding a suitable public venue to rent for worship services and larger children's outreach pro-

grammes. Schools are not as open to weekend church use as they once were, and there are few halls and other suitable buildings in the area at this point

Please keep praying for this new work. It is starting with a core group of approximately 25 people including the Youngs, the Bracefields, the Chuangs, Amjad Khan and his family, and a number of other gifted and eager workers. They have recently been encouraged by a 24-hour prayer vigil and are eager to see what the Lord will do through them and they look to him and follow where he leads.

Redeemer
Grace Presbyterian Church

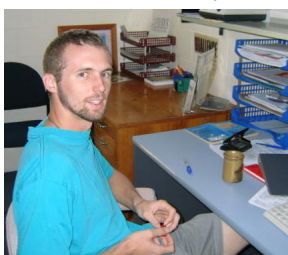


Setting people free through Christ

News and Prayer points from the Churches

Northern Presbytery

Covenant Presbyterian Church



* *Scott Kennedy:* We give thanks and praise God that Scott has now begun his

ministry at Covenant, *ministering to youth*, both within Covenant and locally. Please pray for wisdom in planning our Children's Outreach on Easter Saturday.



* *Louise Kennedy:* We praise God for the way in which He has called Louise to *serve in Japan* on an OMF Serve Asia mission for 9 months in the Tusagaru Chapel,

Itayanagi, Aomori. Louise will be ministering with missionaries Martin and Ruth Ghent. Please pray that Louise will settle in well and that God will use her through the ESOL lessons she will be teaching and as she seeks to build relationships with people.

* *Manukau Christian School:* We give thanks that the Christian School is now fully on site at Covenant and is functioning very well, and for all the hard work that went over the Christmas period. Please pray that God will bless the staff and teachers as they seek to set a Godly witness through their work in the school.

* *Cambodian 2005 Team:* We give thanks for Eddie and Joyce Hogg leaders of the team and for the way in which God is building the team. Please pray as they coordinate with missionaries Craig and

Nayhouy Greenfield as to how the team can be used in the most effective way for the spread of the Gospel in Cambodia. They will be going in October/November.

Trinity Presbyterian Church

* Give thanks for a very encouraging and busy start to the new year. We have already made *new contacts*, had the joy of seeing new people coming to church and received some great *gospel opportunities* in the community.

* We thank God we have a temporary *place to worship*. We are using the apprentice jockey rooms on Airfield Rd, Takanini. This place has proved to be a magnet for drawing people. The rooms are small and it has been hot! But Trinity people are enjoying the rural surroundings.

* We have begun *growth groups* this year with 4 currently running. We are studying the Crown Financial Ministry "Discovering God's Way of Handling Money" via video and study book.

* There is so much to do and so many opportunities so please pray that *in all our ministries the gospel is made 'effective'* to the salvation and that we represent Christ with grace and wisdom.

* Its our prayer at Trinity that lo-

cally and as a national church we *grow in grace and in the knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ

* Prayer for Trinity *Ministries:* Preaching of the Gospel and worship, Children's Church, Spiritual Growth Groups, Bible In School, Team Community/ evangelism visiting, Boys/ Girls Youth outreach, Rest Home Ministry team, Craft in Caravan Park

Sovereign Presbyterian Community Church

* Please pray for *Pastor Moses Ju* and his family who are returning to Korea to work in the Korean Presbyterian Church. Pray for God's blessing, joy to serve God in Korea and peace and assurance that this is God's will. Their departure will be a great loss to us.

* Pray for the *people leaving* us at Sovereign Church and for the *new people* who are coming into our fellowship that they would be willing to learn about Christ and obey and serve him faithfully.

* Sovereign Church 2005 Project for a *Youth place of solace!*- Pray for God's leading in this project, the survey questionnaire and its outcome, for planning and administration, for its business proposal.

Central Presbytery

Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Christchurch

At the EPC we are thankful for a good start to the year. Our Ministry Motto for 2005 is: "God's word, changing people, to change the world."

* *Preaching:* We are working through 1 John in the morning which highlights the dangers of modern-day Gnosticism and the need for Christians to be sure of their faith in Christ. In the evenings we have been enjoying



Manukau Christian School—buildings now complete



Redeemer's ministry house

the Beatitudes, describing the status and character of the citizen of Christ's kingdom.

- * *Bible Studies*: This year we launched into the Growth Groups (Colin Marshall, Matthias Media) method of midweek, home-based Bible studies. We have a great team of study leaders and a willing bunch of participants. At the moment the groups study the sermon passage before Geoff preaches it!
- * *University*: Uni Impact has made an encouraging start to the year with a good relationship with Uni Hall. Uni Impact students and church members helped out on arrival day at the hall. On Sunday nights after church there is a meeting on campus with between 20-30 students attending.
- * *Property*: Currently we are pursuing negotiations with a local rugby club for the purchase of their club rooms. Centrally located with good parking the building offers a great opportunity to enhance our gospel ministry in the community.
- * *Babies*: We rejoice in the births of Faith Morrison, David van den Brink and Madeline Scarlet.

Give thanks for:

- * The *preaching* of the Word
- * A great start to *Growth Groups*
- * Uni Impact making good *contacts*
- * *Covenant children*
- * Plans for *church planting* in Christchurch.

Requests:

- * That *God's Word* would go out

with power in preaching, Bible studies and student meetings

* For *Geoff* as he writes the studies each week, and the *study leaders* as they prepare and lead.

* For *Ron & Cathy Ellis*, back in the USA for their daughter Tabitha's wedding.

- * That we can purchase the *rugby club buildings*
- * For *letterbox drop* of 300 Easter tracts.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ashburton and Fairlie

Ashburton

* The Ashburton congregation rejoices in a number of *new folk* that have been attending in recent months.

* A video series on *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, has been well received, with good attendances on Sunday mornings before the service.

- * Pray for *outreach plans*.
- * Pray too for *one of our members* who has a serious illness.

Fairlie

* *Ross Thompson* is coming to Fairlie near the end of March for a couple of months. Pray that during this time of intensive *contact and visiting* that the Lord will bless the congregation there with both numerical and spiritual *growth*.

Grace @ Wellington

- * Give thanks for how well things are going here in Wellington.
- * We are in the process of organizing Grace@Wellington's first wedding— to be held on 19th March.

Southern Presbytery

Grace Bible Church, Dunedin

Give thanks for:

- * *Contacts* we have made during

the Otago university Orientation.

- * The *new faces* we are seeing at Church.

Please pray:

* For our *congregational challenge* this year of commitment to growth and commitment to service.

* That we would have an *impact upon the city of Dunedin* for the cause of Christ.

- * For our *small group meetings*, that they would stimulate zeal for the Redeemer.

Grace Presbyterian Church, Gore

Please pray for:

- * Health needs of our *elderly*.
- * Renewed possibilities to investigate a *pre-school* and other community-based ministries.

Give thanks for

- * Our new *church van*.
- * That our *small groups* are going well.

Grace Presbyterian Church, Invercargill

Give thanks:

- * For a wonderful *induction* service - Barry Swann is now officially installed as our pastor.

Please pray:

- * For *Easter Camp*
- * For the *Youth*
- * For *outreach* into the community

Wyndham Evangelical Church

Praise that

- * The year has started well with our various *ministries* - Bible in



Peter and Ruth van den Brink and family

Schools, mid-week studies, Sunday School etc.

- * *Peter and Ruth van den Brink* are going to commence ministry amongst us at the end of April.

Pray for

- * The van den Brink family and the *particular needs* of little David.
- * A *suitable house* to become available to rent in Wyndham for the van den Brinks.
- * Our *young people* in their various study and work locations - that they will find God to be their refuge and help and that they will grow in their Christian lives.
- * *Easter camp* - Peter Collier is speaking.
- * Our *plans for renovating* our hall - that they will proceed smoothly.

Catlins Evangelical Church

- * Pray for the *Evangelism course* we are having. We are starting the "Way of the Master" evangelism series beginning March 03. We have invited the other churches in Owaka to come and learn with us also (in an effort to promote a sense of gospel unity among the churches). The series will take us 8 weeks and we will be going to Dunedin, Gore and Invercargill too for street training. Sounds fun doesn't it!
- * A *new family* has just started coming to church and that is encouraging for us.
- * Pray that we would continue to have an *outward focus*.

Tokomairiro Grace Bible Church

- * We are thankful for the *fellowship* we have in the gospel with other congregations within the denomination.
- * We are thankful that *Ross and Ruby Brightwell* have settled in so well and we are appreciating their ministry.
- * We are thankful for the large numbers attending the *After School Kids (ASK) Club*.
- * We are thankful for continued and extended use of the *Waihola Community Church* for evening services.
- * We are saddened by the *departure of the Rakete family* and the migration of tertiary students.

Contacts

Northern Presbytery

- **Covenant Presbyterian Church**
77 Rogers Rd, Manurewa, Auckland
Pastor: Peter Boyd
Ph (09) 269-2553
- **Trinity Presbyterian Church**
Auckland Apprentice Training Rooms,
Airfield Rd, Takanini,
South Auckland
Pastor: Andrew Macpherson
Ph (09) 267-2847
- **Sovereign Presbyterian Community Church (Mission Church)**
14a Grayson Ave, Papatoetoe, Auckland
Pastor: Pita Uo
Ph (09) 275-8945
- **Redeemer Grace Presbyterian Church (Mission Church)**
Ministry House: 1 Eroni Clarke Close,
Chapel Park, Flat Bush, Manukau
Contact: Tony Bracefield
Ph (09) 267-5584

Central Presbytery

- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Christchurch** www.journey.org.nz
The Fendalton Community Centre,
170 Clyde Rd, Fendalton, Christchurch
Pastor: Geoff Macpherson
Ph (03) 342-8617
- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ashburton**
63 Princes St, Ashburton
Contact: David Bayne
Ph: (03) 342-5354
- **Grace @ Wellington (Mission Church)**
Cuba St, Wellington Central
Pastor: Ian Bayne

Ph: (04) 380-9078

- **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Fairlie (Mission Church)**
McKenzie Centre, Fairlie
Contact: Andrew Johnson
Ph: (03) 685-8222

Southern Presbytery

- **Grace Bible Church, Dunedin**
Leith Bowling Club, Duke Street, Dunedin
Pastor: Mark Smith
Ph: (03) 473-8100
- **Tokomairiro Grace Bible Church**
Senior Citizens Room
Union Street, Milton, Otago

Contact: Grant Bullin
Ph: (03) 417-7120

- **Catlins Evangelical Church**
Owaka Community Centre,
3 Ovenden Street, Owaka, South Otago
Contact: Grant Bradfield
Ph: (03) 415-8377
- **Grace Presbyterian Church, Gore**
30 Hamilton Street, East Gore
Pastor: Azriel Gray
Ph (03) 208-8027
- **Wyndham Evangelical Church**
Balaclava Street, Wyndham
Contact: Murray Ure
Ph (03) 206-4713
- **Grace Presbyterian Church, Invercargill**
cnr Centre and Morton Streets,
Georgetown, Invercargill
Contact: Simon Wallace
Ph (03) 214-0098
- **Tuatapere fellowship**
Scout & Guide Hall, Erskine St, Tuatapere
Contact: Bruce Barney
Ph (03) 225 5734

Moderator

- Don Wallace (03) 208-0781

Stated Clerk

- David Bayne (03) 342-5354

Treasurer

- George Wallace (03) 208-6635



GPCNZ's on
the web:
www.gpcnz.org.nz