



Gathered, Dispersed, In Community: Existing to Bless

The Upper Room:

Who we are and where we're going...

Through a series of events and a powerful sense of God's leading, in 2015 a new chapter in the story of Tauranga Central Baptist Church began. A small group of families, with a passion to explore fresh, creative ways of being church, were invited to use TCBC as their meeting place.

At the beginning of 2017 we were joined by Pastor Andrew Maude and his family, who, with our leadership team, have been leading the process of defining who we are, as well as our relationship with the congregation downstairs. We are now pleased to describe ourselves as:

One church, of two congregations, on a journey together.

Our vision: to be a thriving, intergenerational, multi-cultural community of gospel-shaped **WELCOME** in the places where we live, work, and play:

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Our values:

WELCOME WHANAU **WORD** WORSHIP WITNESS

Everything we care about orbits around the **WORD**

- the **Eternal Father and Creator of everything** (Genesis 1)
- the **Holy Spirit**, who lives among us & within us, and who unites us to Christ (Acts 1:8)
- the **living Jesus Christ** (John 1:14), who has welcomed us into relationship with God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit), and with each other: the head of the church, and the embodiment of God's activity in the world
- the **Bible** - a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105)

What this could look like:

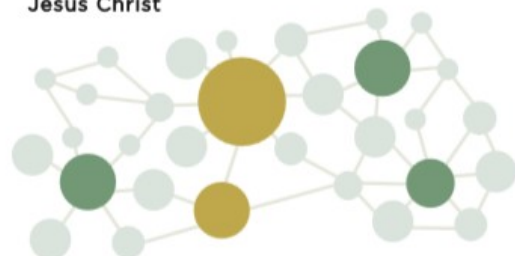
As we grow, our expectation is that Connect Groups will increasingly express the heart of our vision to be a community of "gospel-shaped" **WELCOME** in the places where we live, work, and play.

Our focus on Connect Groups & being "present" in our communities should enable us to grow, whilst developing healthy relationships that are strong, authentic, and that model God's love for everyone.

Each group should explore what this could look like for them, to be free to think "outside the box," and to focus on their growth as a community of gospel-shaped **WELCOME** in their own spheres of influence.

In addition to a context of regular support & encouragement, over time, a Connect Group might also:

- bless / build relationships with a local kindy or school
- build intentional relationships with neighbours
- host home based Alpha courses (or equivalent)
- initiate street get-togethers, connections, or BBQ's
- develop networks of practical care for those in need
- take a lead in aspects of our wider church life
- support & disciple newcomers to faith in Jesus Christ



For all the above reasons, **In 2018, we would love you to be involved in a Connect Group**, and to be thinking & praying together about embodying these values in your neighbourhood.



Our **WELCOME** is an extension of God's **WELCOME** to us - which is a **WELCOME** into **WHĀNAU** (family, in the best sense of the word). Therefore, having been welcomed ourselves, we cherish the opportunity to **WELCOME** others into God's family.

However, because life is so busy, and complex; it's easy for relationships to stay shallow, and to be distracted from the things that really matter.

Therefore, we strive to be a community of **WELCOME**, like **WHĀNAU**, where everyone can feel safe, be real, and belong. This requires us to regularly and intentionally carve out space in our lives for community, for others, and for God.



With **WHĀNAU** comes the embracing of all kinds of people, stages of life, & generations (it's no-longer all about me!). Indeed, **we value diversity, and we cherish the blessings of the relationship between our two congregations:**

The old and the young is the church of today... not just tomorrow, or of yesterday!



The **Central Kids** vision is that each child would develop a deep and ongoing relationship with God, in community, and that they would be so convinced of his love that they can't help but share it!



Central Youth meets alternate Friday nights and are a core part of our community that we want to grow, encourage, and to have meaningfully involved in our community.

Are we Baptist?! Perhaps you could think of the Baptist union as our hapu (our tribe). Yet, this does not imply that we are all Baptist. Even still, we see a huge benefit in our connection with the national Baptist movement and its centralized hub for resourcing, encouraging, and inspiring each local church in its context. Finally, our connection with the Baptist union is a hint of our appreciation for:

- a congregational form of leadership & government
- the "priesthood" / participation of every believer in God's work
- believer's (full immersion) baptism as a symbol & celebration of our commitment to Christ and the local church

Visit www.baptist.org.nz if you are curious to know more.

Aspirations for 2018...

WELCOME & WHĀNAU: To grow as a community of gospel-shaped welcome, to deepen our commitment to community, and to encourage the next generation in the ways of God.

WORD: To deepen our commitment to God's WORD, including fresh rhythms of worship, prayer, and the equipping of each other to live out what we believe.

WORSHIP & WITNESS: To nourish & deepen the meaningful participation of all generations in our rhythms of prayer, worship & witness within our neighbourhoods and as a community.



Among The Upper Room, wherever we are, everything we do is a chance to **WORSHIP** God. This is the meaning of our slogan:

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The same applies to **WITNESS**. Whoever and wherever we are, **WORSHIP** and **WITNESS** are at the heart of our response to God's **WORD** of love to everyone.

Moreover, against societal trends of individualism and self-absorption, our vision is to be a people whose **WORSHIP** and **WITNESS** is shaped and defined by a God who is both communal and self-giving: 'a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God' (Romans 12:1).



At the heart of 'existing to bless' is the art of being increasingly attentive and responsive (to God and to others) in the places where we live, work, and play. It's about carving out time and space amidst the busyness of life to love what God loves and to value community. Therefore, **our weekly gatherings** are our chance to celebrate and be encouraged by what's happening in our communities: testimonies & stories, worship & prayer, laughter & fun, the challenge to grow & develop our relationship(s) with God and others *in community*.

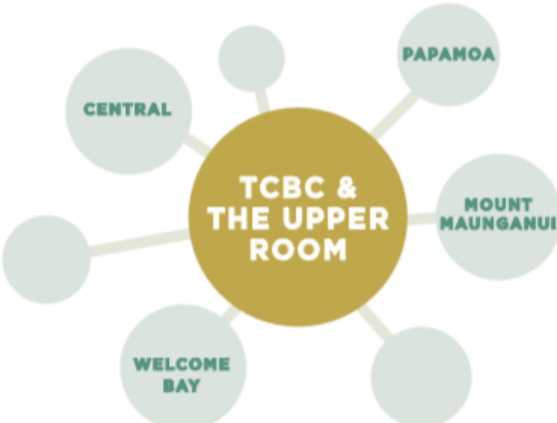
Where this is going:

Growth through neighbourhood Connect Groups...



Given that we are dispersed across the city, the best way for us to grow and stay connected, is through weekly Connect Groups. A Connect Group is a network of people in your community where you can give and find support, encouragement, and the ongoing challenge to grow and participate in God's work, as we encounter God's **WORD** together.

Consequently, **The Upper Room** (and TCBC) should be seen as a hub for the pooling of resources, encouragement, worship, wider connection, the teaching & application of the Bible, and community celebration!



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