

SPREADING EASTER JOY

Words + Photos: James Beck

Reflecting on the Good News Project

Just before Lent this year, hundreds of young people from youth groups across Christchurch gathered to be a part of The Good News Project.

Lent is beautiful. It helps us to prepare our hearts as we head towards Easter which is a time of renewal, hope, and celebration. But Lent is also a time when we reflect on the state of our hearts and the state of our world.

The Faith and Belief Study explores the spiritual landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand. It was released towards the end of 2023 and it tells us that 37% of people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand feel hopeless about the state of the planet and the future of human life. We believe that both Easter and Lent are an opportunity to both lament and take action. We can pay attention to the ecological crises of our world, and we can join with the resurrected Jesus to work toward the renewal of God's good creation.

That is what the Good News Project is all about!

The Good News Project took place on the Saturday before Lent began. It was an incredible celebration of the Church community. Over 100 young people gathered at Te Ihutai - The Estuary in Ōtautahi Christchurch to spread hope, joy, and mulch. The Estuary connects Ōtautahi to the world, as it is a significant habitat for many migratory birds. Over the past 150 years, humans have significantly degraded the ecosystems, but the Church came together to help renew and restore the whenua - even if it was only in a small way.

People from the Christchurch City Council and other volunteer groups were amazed by the number of young people who were willing to give up their time to care for the estuary.

One young person said "It's cool to see everyone working together to care for the land. It's amazing how many young people are here and getting stuck into it - it's incredible! It's so much fun, and it doesn't feel like a bunch of different youth groups, it feels like one big youth group. It's epic!"

The event was organised by A Rocha New Zealand's Eco Church project, in partnership with Canterbury Youth Services. Every young person who volunteered at the event got a free ticket to an evening event. The event featured bands, speakers, and a bunch of fun, but the main point of The Good News Project is that young people would hear the Good News and then go and be the Good News.

But the Good News Project is more than just a one-day celebration. It's a call to action for everyone in the community to join with God to care for His creation.

As we reflect on both The Good News Project and the implications of Easter, we believe that there are several ways we can continue to outwork the Good News in our own settings.

With so many people feeling so hopeless about the state of our world, we think it is more important than ever for followers of Jesus to step into the biblical mandate to care for God's good creation.



So maybe this Easter it means letting some old practices die so that our world can thrive.

Maybe it means biking, walking, or using public transport more. Maybe you could commit to finding sustainable ways to get to and from church on Sunday.

Maybe it means thinking about how you could eat more sustainably.

Maybe it means joining a local environmental restoration project. There are projects in the Port Hills and on the banks of the Ōtakaro and Ōpāwaho. In Ōtautahi Christchurch there are hundreds of projects that need more volunteers.

There are so many things that we can do to reduce our impact on the world and to take steps to actively care for His creation.

As we look back on the Good News Project, we feel deeply encouraged by all of the young people who are taking action. And as we reflect on the meaning of Easter, maybe we could once again commit ourselves to Jesus' message of hope, renewal, and love. When we put what we believe into action in our lives by choosing to live sacrificially, we really can bring a little bit of heaven to earth.

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