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**Kia ora tātou,**

### **Post-passports church**

The essence of church is about gathering together as the Lord's people, for fellowship, worship, prayer, proclamation of Christ, the teaching of the word, encouragement, and serving others.

Through the pandemic, most churches have continued to function, using online options, small groups, and different types of church services, but it has undoubtedly been challenging.

The easing of gathering limits (25 March) this week) and the end of vaccination passport requirements (4 February) will be a welcome relief to most churches. Larger gatherings will be possible, and the church can begin to put behind us some of the complexities and consternations of the last few months.

Let's pray that, in this new and different phase of Covid, Christians may relate to one another with grace, respect, and humility, that churches may steadily recover their life together, that churches may reach out to those members who have become less connected or have felt disaffected, that we may discern what God has been showing us in these difficult times, and that we may more effectively communicate the hope and truth of Christ around us who those who are spiritually adrift.

### **Praying about war**

Please continue to pray for all those who suffer in war, in Ukraine and elsewhere:

- those bereaved, wounded, traumatised, or displaced
- those – including church leaders – who speak out against war
- those who work for peace.

Tonight (25 May), at 7.00 p.m., there is an online gathering to pray for peace in Ukraine. See details below.

Also, we share below a courageous open letter from the General Secretary of the Russian Evangelical Alliance, Rev Vitaly Vlasenko. He laments the invasion of Ukraine and all the suffering it is causing. He expresses “deep sorrow, bitterness and regret for decisions taken by the leadership of my country, and a great compassion for those suffering as a result of this decision”. Shortly before the invasion, Vlasenko wrote to President Putin, and urged him to find a peaceful way forward.

Note: The Russian Evangelical Alliance is a member of the World Evangelical Alliance, and is one of 127 such national evangelical alliances (including the New Zealand Christian Network) which are affiliated with the WEA.

[Here's a prayer for refugees, from someone who was a war refugee.](#)

### Living with the “conversion practices” law: some initial suggestions

New Zealand’s experience with the Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation has been far from ideal. Because such legislation was a Labour Party election manifesto policy, and because the Government has had such a huge majority, the select committee process was something of a farce. Many thousands of thoughtful submissions were made, critiquing obvious biases and deficiencies in the Bill, and suggesting constructive improvements. But the select committee shamefully stonewalled them all, and back in the debating chamber so did the majority of MPs.

Parents, schools, counsellors, and churches are now left trying to work out how to interpret and apply the new law.

At one level, the prohibition on coercive and harmful “therapy” practices for LGBT people is a good thing, and was supported by NZCN and many others. Nobody should be subjected to practices that are unsolicited, or demeaning or harmful. It also needs to be said that the incidence of such practices in New Zealand appears to be very rare, especially nowadays.

We can also readily agree with the second stated aim of the law, to encourage “respectful and open discussions regarding sexuality and gender”. The problem though, is that very little in the law appears to facilitate open discussion, but on the contrary appears likely to inhibit or close down any “open” discussion (except when such discussion is *endorsing* same-sex identity or gender transition).

A key (and contradictory) sentence in the new law, and relevant to both parents and church leaders, allows for “the expression only of a religious principle or belief made to an individual that is not intended to change or suppress the individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression”.

On the one hand, the *first* part of that sentence appears to protect in law the right of anyone to express to an individual religious beliefs or principles about sexuality or gender.

- A parent could, for example, express their disbelief in gender transition, or express some cautions or beliefs about potential losses or risks associated with gender transition, or say: “I personally don’t believe it is wise for people aged 12 to take puberty blockers, because most people

with gender dysphoria become comfortable with the sex they were born into once they have begun puberty”.

- A parent or church leader could say: “I believe the Bible teaches that God loves everyone, and invites us to follow him and his ways”, or “I believe the Bible teaches that God’s intention for human sexual expression is loving faithful marriage between one man and one woman”.

However, such expressions of belief will need to be respectful and non-coercive, conveyed with compassion and gentleness, and with respect for people’s worth, dignity, and freedom of choice.

The *second* part of the sentence, however, forbids anything “intended to change or suppress the individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression”. This clause appears to directly contradict the law’s avowed aim to encourage “open” discussion about sexuality and gender, is a contravention of religious freedom as enshrined in the Bill of Rights (because Christian faith is not just about “beliefs” but also about personal choices and conduct), and is in effect a denial of people’s rights to seek whatever advice and support they may feel they need.

How this clause may be interpreted by courts is hard to predict, but it would be wise for anyone giving advice or support to anyone else in these matters to ensure that whatever they say, pray, or do is unfailingly respectful, loving, non-coercive, and unharmful, giving full weight to people’s freedom of choice.

Whatever we do, we must be faithful to God’s grace and truth as revealed in Christ and the Scriptures, act with integrity, and be responsive to the Spirit of God.

Mā te Atua koutou e tiaki e manaaki i nga wa katoa,  
*May the Lord bless and keep you at all times,*



**Dr Stuart Lange**  
*National Director*



**Gayann Phillips**  
*General Manager*

and the NZCN team

*P.S. If you haven’t yet caught up with the postponements of the Forum and Congress, see [here](#).*



# UNITED PRAYER FOR THE UKRAINE

**MARCH 25, 2022; 7PM (WORLDWIDE)**

We call believers from around the world to pray for the Ukraine. Let's stand together for peace in this horrific situation.

No online registration needed.

**Join us by praying at home or at your church!**



GO MOVEMENT



# Head of Russia Evangelical Alliance Sends Open Letter Lamenting Military Invasion, Praying for Forgiveness

To my dear brothers and sisters around the world:

As the General Secretary of the Russian Evangelical Alliance, I mourn what my country has done in its recent military invasion of another sovereign country, Ukraine.

For me, as for many other Christians, the military invasion was a shock. In the worst-case scenario, I could not imagine what is now being observed in Ukraine. Two peoples closely related to each other, many of whom are deeply devoted to the Christian (primarily Orthodox) faith, are now in a fierce battle—one side pursuing the goal of demilitarizing Ukraine, the other seeking to save their country from occupation.

Many Russians and Ukrainians have close family relations in the opposite country. A Russian may have daughters and grandchildren living in Kyiv; a Ukrainian may have children living and working in Moscow. Today, pain, fear, and deep sorrow for their loved ones and for the future of their own lives and countries, pierce the hearts of many people like lightning, because since the Second World War, no one knows what the limits of war and its consequences may be.

Today, soldiers from one side and the other are dying. Peaceful feelings are being destroyed amidst the bombing and shelling, and a stream of increased attention has rushed across Europe in the form of refugees: women, the elderly, and children.

All these events cause me deep sorrow, bitterness and regret for decisions taken by the leadership of my country, and a great compassion for those suffering as a result of this decision.

Everything I could do to prevent war, I did in an attempt to stop this military invasion:

In my capacity as General Secretary of the Russian Evangelical Alliance, I wrote an open letter to President Vladimir Putin the day before the invasion, in which I supported the request of the religious leaders of Ukraine for a peaceful solution to all conflict.

We initiated fasting and prayer for peace and harmony between Russia and Ukraine.

Our Alliance took part in public prayer alongside Russian, Ukrainian, and European leaders for the reconciliation of all parties.

The Russian Evangelical Alliance provided humanitarian assistance to more than 500 refugees from Ukraine stationed in southern Russia.

We initiated a roundtable and subsequent international conference on the topic of military and political conflicts.

Today, as a citizen and as General Secretary of the Russian Evangelical Alliance, I apologize to all those who have suffered, lost loved ones and relatives, or lost



their place of residence as a result of this military conflict. My prayer is that you will find strength from the Lord to extend your hand of solidarity and forgiveness, so we can live as the people of God to our world.

May our heavenly Father help us all.

With deep respect, your brother in the Lord,

*Vitaly Vlasenko*

*12 March 2022*



[Auckland Church Leaders and Rhema Ministries](#)

## A short devotional talk from 'The Daily', a pre-Easter video series

This series is a daily 3.5 minutes talk by a very wide range of church leaders, giving witness to both the Christian message and to our unity in Christ.

*Keri-Ann Hokianga, Evangelist with the Māori Anglican Church shares about the importance of being both innocent and wise in our lives as followers of Jesus*

Sign up to receive 'The Daily' in your inbox

Join Pray As One NZ on Zoom 8-9pm Mondays



# INTERCEDING FOR OUR GOVERNMENT

## HON ALFRED NGARO

[Intercessors Aotearoa](#)

## Interceding For Our Government

Last Monday, we invited Alfred Ngaro to share with us about Intercessors Aotearoa, a movement that equips, informs and mobilises intercessors with strategies, information and prayer points on government, legislation and heritage to impact our nation, our whānau, and future generations.

Their heart is to support and resource intercessory groups throughout Aotearoa. People access these resources via their weekly e-news and a private Facebook group. You can sign up via their website.

Also, Intercessors Aotearoa hosts a weekly Zoom prayer meeting on Wednesdays from 7:30-9pm, where they present the week's Prayer Points to the wider group before placing people into smaller groups (breakout rooms) to pray and seek the Lord's direction. Groups are led by an experienced prayer facilitator who guides the hour of prayer and reports back to their wider leadership for discernment.

[Connect with Intercessors Aotearoa](#)

Would you like to have your organisation featured in our newsletter, post employment opportunities on our job board, or list events on our calendar?

You can! These are benefits we make available to NZCN member churches and Christian organisations.

[Click here to learn more about memberships](#)

## NZCN featured member

Listed on our [Directory](#) by our Church and Christian Organisation members



## You can help refugee children now



World Vision is on the ground right now at the Ukrainian border in Romania **distributing emergency aid packages**, including hygiene and child-friendly kits, to children and their families forced from their homes. We also aim to support children to continue their education and provide them with psychosocial support to help them deal with the trauma they've experienced.

Donate now to help children and families affected by the crisis in Ukraine

[Visit the website](#)

[Check out NZCN's listing](#)

## Events



Listed on our [Event Calendar](#) by our Church and Christian Organisation members



## GET SOLID ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

DEFEND FAITH. NAVIGATE CULTURE. REACH PEOPLE.

**TAURANGA**  
20-21 May

**CHRISTCHURCH**  
10-11 June

**WELLINGTON**  
1-2 July

**HAMILTON**  
29-30 July

**AUCKLAND**  
12-13 August

Are you struggling to share your Christian faith as our culture becomes increasingly hostile to Christianity? Our team at Thinking Matters believes ALL Christians can feel confident in sharing their faith to their friends, family, co-workers, even strangers, in a way that reveals the truth, reality, and love of God. We believe there is no reason to be afraid of being questioned about your faith in Jesus or the Christian Worldview because we know Christianity has the answers our culture desperately needs.

We understand how opposition to Christianity can be overwhelming, as we've helped thousands of New Zealand Christians become more confident in their faith and understanding of the Christian worldview.

Join us at our Confident Christianity Conference where we will help you overcome some of the toughest questions facing Christians today. This year's speakers aim to give you confidence in the rationality of your faith and worldview, helping you better engage with our current culture. Something we know sits in the heart of every believer.

veritatis et quasi architecto.

**Visit the [CONFIDENT CHRISTIANITY website](#)**

## Employment Opportunities

Listed on our [Job Board](#) by our Church and Christian Organisation members

[Camp Grounds/Maintenance](#) - full-time  
MiCamp Taupo



[Lead Activity Instructor/camp worker](#) - full-time

MiCamp Taupo

[Grounds/Maintenance & Instructor](#) - full-time

MiCamp Whakamaru

[Camp Chef/Cook](#) - full-time

Taupo



[Budget Solutions Advisor](#) - full-time

Penrose, Auckland

[Operations Administrator](#) - - full-time

Penrose, Auckland

[Information Technology Manager](#) - full-time

Penrose, Auckland



[Office Administrator](#) - part-time

Wellington

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Help spread the news...

New Zealand society is in a period of significant change, much of it away from the Christian faith and values. Christian voices in society are either ignored or scorned.

We need Christian voices which are positive, sensible, reasoned, well-informed, and clear.

Forward to a friend



**NZ Christian Network**

PO Box 16004, Sandringham, Auckland 1351

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