



LIDLAW
THEOLOGY

HOPE CONFERENCE

26-28 MARCH 2025

*Growing Flourishing Church Communities
that Transform and Heal People*

HOPE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY

12:30pm	Gathering
12:55pm	Introductions Prayer
1:15pm	Rev. Dr MaryKate Morse <i>Flourishing in the inner life (resurrection hope)</i>

SECTION ONE

Individual Healing: Bodies Flourishing in the Body

2:10pm	Introduce Speakers
2:15pm	Rev. Dr Mark Keown <i>The human body and Christ's church: Extending Paul's metaphor through his somatic understanding</i>
2:45pm	Afternoon Tea
3:25pm	Rev. Dr Maja Whitaker <i>Healthy and holy bodies: Reimagining Christian practice and discourse to promote flourishing in diversity</i>
3:55pm	Rev. Jonathan Dove <i>Discomfort and diversity as catalysts for individual transformation within the church body</i>
4:30pm	Discussion

THURSDAY AM

8:30am	Prayer
8:45am	Rev. Dr MaryKate Morse <i>Flourishing in community (relational holiness)</i>

SECTION TWO

Church Healing: Growing Communities which Restore and Transform

9:25am	Introduce Speakers
9:30am	Dr Christa McKirland <i>Shepherding well: A theology of interpersonal power and authority</i>
10am	Morning Tea
10:40am	Rev. Dr Karen Kemp <i>Compassionate realism: How does the church reclaim her core identity as a hope-filled community of healing and restoration?</i>
11:10am	Rev. Watiri Maina <i>The church body as a healing sacrament</i>
11:45am	Discussion
12:15pm	Lunch

HOPE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY PM

1:15pm

Parallel Sessions - 3x 30minutes - Contributors will speak on a range of topics in relation to church flourishing and hope, with examples of positive instances of transformation from within their churches

SECTION THREE

Church Flourishing: Sustaining the Healing Power of the Church

2:45pm

Introduce Speakers

2:50pm

Rev. Dr Geoff New *At a loss for words: How the Spirit prays when the children of God can't (Romans 8:18-27)*

3:20pm

Afternoon Tea

4pm

Rev. Dr Sarah Penwarden *Listening to each other: Attunement as a practice for sustaining community*

4:30pm

The Venerable Lyndon Drake *Tūmanako Me Whakahounga: Forms of hope and renewal in the context of contemporary Aotearoa*

FRIDAY

5:05pm

Discussion

8:30am

Prayer

8:45am

Rev. Dr MaryKate Morse *Flourishing in context (radical hospitality)*

SECTION FOUR

Missional Hope: Nourishing the wider community through our hope

9:40am

Introduce Speakers

9:45am

Rev. Dr Greg Liston *Empowered by the Spirit: Revitalizing the church's mission in New Zealand through applying Newbigin's insights*

10:15am

Morning Tea

10:55am

Rev. Dr Brian Harris *Beyond "them" and "us": Bumping into God in the marketplace*

11:25am

Dr Lynne Taylor *Sharing faith, imaging God, nourishing hope: Faith and hope that is relational, mysterious, and transformational*

12pm

Discussion

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
MARYKATE
MORSE**

**Flourishing in the inner life
(resurrection hope)**

Wednesday 26 March 2025
1:15pm

**Flourishing in community
(relational holiness)**

Thursday 27 March 2025
8:45am

Flourishing in context (radical hospitality)

Friday 28 March 2025 | 8:45am



ABSTRACT

Thriving in uncertain times is often defined more by outward success, but for Christian believers it is also defined by a deep conviction that Christ is the source and the reason for why we do what we do. We are Christian pastors, educators, and leaders. We have a holy calling. We are engaged in a holy vocation. We lead from the center of Christ in us.

This type of leadership is more than following Jesus' teachings. It is a life lived out of an inner conviction of the indwelling presence of Christ. Therefore, ours is a uniquely embodied leadership, and even more so when our work is in churches and institutions that are shaped by faith convictions. We must live out our callings in specific, physical ways and in specific places. Jesus came in the flesh to physically express the nature of God and God's work in the world in a specific place. By routinizing our physical behaviors in physical spaces, we can lead more implicitly like Jesus. These behaviors are central to effective leadership and inspire hope within us and with others, especially during difficult times.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr MaryKate Morse is the former Executive Dean of Portland Seminary at George Fox University and serves now as a professor of Leadership & Spiritual Formation. She is the Lead Mentor in the Doctor of Ministry program on Leadership & Spiritual Formation. She is a church planter, spiritual director, leadership mentor and coach, speaker, and author including *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space, and Influence*, *A Guidebook to Prayer*, and *Lifelong Leadership*. She is passionate about companioning and resourcing people on the front lines of ministry.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
MARK
KEOWN**

The human body and Christ's church: Extending Paul's metaphor through his somatic understanding

Wednesday 26 March 2025
2:15pm



ABSTRACT

Paul has a rich understanding of the human body. He affirms its createdness and supreme value. In Romans and 1 Corinthians, Paul also speaks of the local church as the body of Christ made up of many members. This session argues that Paul's view of the individual human body can be legitimately applied to his understanding as the church as the body of Christ. As such, we can appropriately extend his understanding beyond what he says in passages specifically focused on the local church as the body of Christ. In this session, first, Paul's understanding of the human body is summarized. Next it outlines Paul's understanding of the local church as the body of Christ. Then, it draws the two ideas together considering the church in light of Paul's understanding of the human body. Like the human body, the local church is a creation and composition of God. However, it is prone to the weakness of its flesh whereby it becomes corrupted. If unabated, the church will die. Yet, the church is also a temple in which God's Spirit dwells. The path to its healing and growth is a community living in Christ by the Spirit. Such a community is formed together into the image of the Son through the power of the Spirit. Implications for the church today are then suggested.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr Mark J. Keown is the Director of Evangelistic Leadership at Laidlaw College and a Presbyterian minister who presently attends Massey Presbyterian. He has served in a variety of spaces in evangelism, children's and youth ministries, worship, and senior leadership. Mark has written a number of articles, essays, blog posts, and books including *Evangelism in Philippians* (2008), *What's God Up to on Planet Earth?* (2010), *Philippians, EEC*, 2 vols. (2017), *Jesus in a World of Colliding Empires*, 2 vols. (2018), *Discovering the New Testament* (3 Vols, 2018–21), *Reading the New Testament* (2024), *Galatians* (2024), *Pneumaformity* (2024), and *Jesus as the New Joshua* (2024). Married to the Rev. Dr Emma and owned by Redmond the dog, he loves cycling and playing in his band AllReady Not Yet.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
MAJA
WHITAKER**

**Healthy and holy bodies:
Reimagining Christian
practice and discourse
to promote flourishing in
diversity**

Wednesday 26 March 2025
3:25pm



ABSTRACT

A biblically-grounded understanding of embodiment offers much-needed hope to the modern Western struggle with the body as a project to be worked on to reflexively shape the self in the pursuit of the good life. Health, theologically understood, entails holistic flourishing and this flourishing incorporates holiness expressed in right relationship with God, self, other, and creation. However, historically the Christian tradition has struggled with the nature of human persons as embodied beings, often dismissing the body or viewing it as primarily something to be disciplined. These issues continue in contemporary Christian communities which have too often uncritically promoted body-projects shaped by the aesthetic ideals of Western culture. For example, the hidden toxicity of diet culture and its questionable claims to produce health and wellbeing have been uncritically absorbed, Christianised, and marketed from Christian celebrity platforms and the common pulpit. This session will draw on the richness of the Christian tradition, both in terms of theological reflection and embodied practice, to outline ways that contemporary Christian communities can support the holistic flourishing of their members. The telos of the body is not conforming to an ideal of health or beauty, but loving God and loving neighbour, and within this there is space for the generous hosting of diverse bodies. It will explore how the discourse and practices in Christian communities might be reimagined to focus on the discipling of the embodied person rather than the disciplining of the body.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr Maja Whitaker is the Academic Dean and lecturer in Practical Theology at Laidlaw College, based at the Christchurch campus, and a pastor in the Equippers network of churches. Among other works, her most recent publication is *Perfect in Weakness: Disability and Human Flourishing in the New Creation* with Baylor University Press (2023). She is passionate about spiritual formation and helping others understand how to follow the way of Jesus in contemporary cultural contexts. Maja's research interests include the theology of the body, theological anthropology, disability theology, and eschatology. She is married to Dave and they have four daughters.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV.
JONATHAN
DOVE**

**Discomfort and diversity
as catalysts for individual
transformation within the
church body**

*Wednesday 26 March 2025
3.55pm*



ABSTRACT

Transformation happens best at the intersection of discomfort, community, and the divine. Using stories derived from Gracecity church, this session will look at the valuable contribution ethnic, political, and social diversity have all played as individuals in church have grown amidst learning from diverse communities, such as through political round table conversations, ethnic stories, and the experiences of a couple serving in ministry to the homeless. Stories of church leaders from Auckland Church Network (ACN) will also be shared to examine the valuable contribution that exposure of different church prayer practices has had among church leaders learning from each other, such as in Pentecostal Christians embracing contemplative prayer practices from Catholic leaders. Additionally, this session will unpack lessons from a 12-week leadership challenge at Gracecity church where individuals were placed in situations with practices which caused some discomfort - all designed to help them hear and see afresh what God might be saying to them personally. It will show the way this discomfort and the role of this community was a catalyst for their leadership formation and mission engagement.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Jonathan Dove is married to Robyn and father of four. He is the Senior Pastor of Gracecity Church. He has a Master of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. He convenes Auckland Church Network, composed of bishops and senior leaders. He is a visionary, gifted teacher, life-long learner, passionate about people coming to know Jesus and building a strong community of believers. His spare time is made up of family adventures, quality coffee, a good book, an All Blacks game, and walks at Te Mata Peak, Hawkes Bay.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**DR CHRISTA
MCKIRLAND**

**Shepherding well: A theology
of interpersonal power and
authority**

Thursday 27 March 2025
9:30am



ABSTRACT

The metaphor of God as Israel's Shepherd (Psalm 23), leaders of Israel as shepherds of the people of God (both good and bad), Jesus as the Good Shepherd (and sacrificial lamb), the church as the flock that knows Good Shepherd's voice, and NT leaders as undershepherds, provides a pastoral throughline across the Christian canon. But what is the relationship between the Shepherd, undershepherds, and sheep meant to be like today? Using this metaphor as a lens, this session will look at interpersonal power and authority, and will propose that each member of the flock is meant to hear the Shepherd's voice, but not in isolation. We need the flock, especially members of the flock that know the Shepherd well and are living a life worthy of imitation. These other members do not have authority over the flock or individual sheep, but they do have power to point other members to the Chief Shepherd. Importantly, every member of the flock has the potential to guide other sheep to the Chief Shepherd. We will conclude with a prayer from the sheep that we might tune our hearts to hear the Good Shepherd's voice whether we are in the valley of the shadow of death or green pastures. The Good Shepherd is with us no matter where we go.

SPEAKER BIO

Dr Christa L. McKirland is a Lecturer in Systematic theology at Carey Baptist College in Tāmaki Makaurau Aotearoa. She is also the Executive Director of Logia International which encourages women to pursue postgraduate theological education for the sake of the academy and church. Her research has focused on humanity's fundamental need for union with God in her most recent publication: *God's Provision, Humanity's Need: The Gift of Our Dependence* (Baker, 2022).

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
KAREN
KEMP**

Compassionate realism: How does the church reclaim her core identity as a hope-filled community of healing and restoration?

*Thursday 27 March 2025
10:40am*



ABSTRACT

From the earliest days the church has been known as a place of refuge, healing, and restoration. However, it is not possible to talk about the church as a healing community without probing the current reality of a church that has become known as a place where the very things which traditionally made it a haven for the broken have tragically enabled harm. So, how does a church mired in 'bad news' become hope-filled good news again? Healing and restoration lie at the very heart of what it means to be the people of God, but we cannot talk about hope in a vacuum. Indeed, the Good News of the Church is less that she is free of brokenness, but rather that she embodies a healing and restoring Gospel with compassionate realism in the midst of her own brokenness. Healing begins with lament, so this session probes the conditions which contribute to the current state of affairs. It is from this place of lament and humility that the church can find her place in God's bigger story of reconciling all things in Christ Jesus. The litany of moral failure and abuse throws down a challenge to the church to reclaim her core identity and purpose, and to embody both collective and individual dimensions of that calling in ways that engender hope in a broken world. This session locates restoration as a necessary precursor to the transformation we seek both individually and collectively. Finally, this session calls for a reorientation toward a compassionate realism to underpin both the posture and practice of church leadership in recognition of the key role that leaders play in cultivating the church's faithfulness to her core identity and calling as a healing and restorative community.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr Karen Kemp is a Senior Coach in the Laidlaw Centre for Church Leadership and Lecturer in the School of Theology. She holds a research Masters in conflict transformation, and a Doctorate in leadership and spiritual formation. Research interests gravitate around peace and reconciliation and include practices that support healing the wounds of history, formation of emerging leaders, and the role of "third culture" persons in building peace. Karen is an Anglican scholar-priest deeply formed by her intercultural experiences in nursing, community development, ministry, missions, and theological education. Karen shares life with husband, Hugh, and three adult daughters.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV.
WATIRI
MAINA**

**The church body as a healing
sacrament**

Thursday 27 March 2025
11:10am



ABSTRACT

This session will discuss the concept of the church body as a healing sacrament, emphasizing the importance of creating flourishing communities that nurture healing, restoration, and transformation. It will acknowledge that while the church community is often envisioned as the body of Christ, there are times when it struggles, hindered by conflict and dysfunction. To foster flourishing, this session will suggest intentional practices such as restorative approaches, constructive language use, and envisioning transformation. Drawing from biblical models and metaphors, it will explore how these practices can transcend conflict and promote healing. It also highlights the significance of intersubjectivity and relational depth in creating spaces for transformative encounters. This session will outline various practices essential for building healthy communities, including prayer, preaching, modelling wholeness, restorative conversations, and peace-making initiatives. It will emphasize the role of communal commitment and leadership in facilitating healing and transformation within the church. Furthermore, it will present the idea of sacramental churches, which embody sanctifying, social, and subversive sacraments, demonstrating unity in Christ and sharing His love with the world. It will argue that through unity and love, the church can attract others to experience healing and transformation within its community. Overall, this session will advocate for a holistic approach to church community building, where members actively engage in practices that promote healing, restoration, and transformation. By embodying the values of Christ and fostering unity, the church can serve as a healing sacrament, inviting others into transformative encounters with God.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Watiri Maina is an Anglican priest serving in Nelson diocese. She is the vicar of Victory Community Church. She is also a spiritual director, retreat facilitator, supervisor and counsellor in private practice. She has a Masters in Counselling Psychology and a graduate diploma in Theology. Her interests are in supporting of flourishing ministry and ministry leaders, prayer, as well as in peace building and conflict transformation. She is married to Steve and they have two daughters.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
GEOFF
NEW**

**At a loss for words: How
the Spirit prays when the
children of God can't
(Romans 8:18-27)**

*Thursday 27 March 2025
2:50pm*



ABSTRACT

In Romans 8, the effects of suffering, groaning, hoping, and waiting culminate in a realistic and startling admission; the people of God are weakened and prayerless. Yet, amid such anguish, the thread of groaning is seen not only in creation and humanity, but in the ministry of the Spirit of the Resurrection. “The Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Rom 8:26). The intercessory ministry of the Spirit is presented as a crucial theological response to the plight of creation and the children of God. However, in a context of suffering and the call to adopt the posture of patient hope (Rom 8:24-25); what is the church’s response to the promise of the Spirit’s intercession? When weakened and prayerless, does the church demonstrate a spirituality that attests to divine agency instead of human activity? What are we to make of the mystery that the children of God do not know what to pray, and neither do they know what is being prayed (the Spirit prays in “wordless groans”)? What is the place of groaning in Christian prayer and faith? This session will explore the distinct nature of the Spirit’s intercessory ministry and offer reflection on how this shapes the church’s life and ministry. Such life and ministry is ultimately marked by distinct salvific hope in the adoption and redemption of humanity; “For in this hope we were saved” (vv 23- 24).

SPEAKER BIO

Rev Dr Geoff New is the principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (Dunedin). Geoff has previously served as a minister for 17 years, a police chaplain, and as adjunct lecturer in preaching (Laidlaw College). He has authored four books on preaching and regularly trained preachers in south Asia for Langham Preaching.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
SARAH
PENWARDEN**

**Listening to each other:
Attunement as a practice for
sustaining community**
Thursday 27 March 2025
4pm



ABSTRACT

We walk towards God in community. We are the Body of Christ and we are being the Body of Christ together. The church is thus both the work of the Spirit and the work of us, the people. How do we do church together with each other in a way that enables hope and flourishing to occur? This session imagines a church community responsive to each other, where leaders and people are in tune with each other. It begins by highlighting how listening within a church community can help it align or re-align with the overall vision and purpose of being the Body of Christ. It focuses on two examples of practices of attunement. Firstly, it describes the value of sermon evaluations as a practice of attunement. Secondly, it presents a survey designed and completed with the speaker's own church where congregants were invited to identify which elements of church life created flourishing and hope in their lives. Such practices are tools through which to listen within the Body – with our mind, heart and ears – to hear the promptings of the Spirit.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr Sarah Penwarden is a counsellor, supervisor, and trainer in private practice based in Auckland. She has a PhD in Counselling from the University of Waikato. Her interest is in grieving and how writing stories can help a person journey in and through grief. She is a lecturer in the School of Theology on a part-time basis and is interested in holding in tandem the realities of life struggles with the hope of the gospel. She co-edited the book, *Stories of Therapy, Stories of Faith*. Sarah is an ordained Anglican priest in the Local Shared Ministry context of the Auckland Diocese. She is married to David, with three adult step-children and lives in leafy west Auckland.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

THE VENERABLE DR LYNDON DRAKE

**Tūmanako Me
Whakahounga: Forms of
hope and renewal in the
context of contemporary
Aotearoa**

Thursday 27 March 2025
4:30pm



ABSTRACT

A theological approach to restoration needs to draw on plausible forms of hope. For the church, plausible hope is grounded in the promises of God and the corresponding obligations of the church. God's promises in scripture portray a future where the church is effective and fruitful. They portray a restored world, which has become once again a temple for God's worship, filled with humans whose identity as God's children is brought to light in allegiance to Jesus and transformed lives. The church receives from the same scriptures obligations about its collective behaviour in the world, in the vocation of heralding the coming king. This session problematises hope for renewal that is based on programmes for churches to implement, or on concepts of leadership and structure. Instead, it draws on biblical texts that connect God's promises to the collective action of God's people in repentance, and suggest methods of reading these texts that draw from the Māori prophetic movements. It then offers some concrete proposals for the church in Aotearoa/New Zealand to draw from these exegetical insights and build a constructive approach to renewal that is grounded in righteous action, and then builds a prophetic voice.

SPEAKER BIO

Dr Lyndon Drake (Ngāti Kuri, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, Ngāi Tahu) until recently served as Archdeacon of Tāmaki Makaurau in the Māori Anglican bishopric of Te Tai Tokerau. Lyndon has a DPhil in Theology at Oxford on economic capital in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, degrees in science and commerce (Auckland), a PhD in artificial intelligence (York), two other degrees in theology (Oxford), and a number of peer-reviewed academic publications in science and theology. Lyndon has written *Capital Markets for the Common Good: A Christian Perspective* (Oxford: 2017). Until 2010, Lyndon was a Vice President at Barclays Capital, trading government bonds and interest-rate derivatives. Since then, he has served in church ministry, as well as teaching theology and serving in a range of Christian leadership roles. He sat on a number of boards, including as chair of Te Whare Ruru hau o Meri Trust Board, and is married to Miriam with three children.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
GREG
LISTON**

**Empowered by the Spirit:
Revitalizing the church's
mission in New Zealand
through applying Newbigin's
insights**

*Friday 28 March 2025
9:45am*



ABSTRACT

By embracing Newbigin's insights and relying on the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, the church in New Zealand can embark on a journey of missional revitalization. The central insight undergirding this journey is the recognition that it is the church actually being the church—living a gospel-centred existence—that is and always has been its primary and most effective missional strategy. In contrast to the syncretistic accommodations which see the church increasingly melding into society, Newbigin offers an attractive picture where the church leans into the differences it has with societal norms, confidently owning those distinctions, and thereby missionally affecting the community surrounding it. Recognising and embracing the tensions and challenges of choosing such an eclectic but attractive ecclesial lifestyle is central to the church's ongoing missional witness. This session explores how the Spirit can empower us together to embrace this ecclesial calling, by looking at which contemporary church realities we are called to cling to and those others we need to abandon. It argues that by leaning into our distinctive differences with society, the church in New Zealand can become a dynamic agent of God's love and reconciliation in the nation, offering hope and healing in a complex and changing world.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr Greg Liston is a Senior Lecturer in Theology at Laidlaw College in Auckland, New Zealand, and a pastor at Mt Albert Baptist Church. Previous roles include being the senior pastor of a suburban Baptist church and business management consulting. Greg holds PhDs in quantum physics and ecclesiology. He is the author of several books including *Kingdom Come: An Eschatological Third Article Ecclesiology* (T&T Clark, 2022) and *The Anointed Church* (Fortress Press, 2015). He is married to Diane and has two adult children.

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**REV. DR
BRIAN
HARRIS**

**Beyond “them” and “us”:
Bumping into God in the
marketplace**

*Friday 28 March 2025
10:55am*



ABSTRACT

In this presentation the speaker will discuss his transition from 17 years as principal of a theological college to heading a leadership consultancy in the commercial marketplace. It notes that the “church - world” divide is not as large as expected and discusses three engagements which required him to draw upon his theological training to assist his clients. The first was a mining company wanting a healthier staff culture for one of their teams. The second was an aged care provider desiring to honour their Christian heritage though no longer claiming to be a Christian organisation. The third was a Christian school worried about changing employment legislation and its potential impact on their right to preference staff based on their Christian faith. Assisting each client involved identifying their “theological architecture” – the big ideas shaping who they wanted to be. This session discusses the concept and relevance of “theological architecture”, arguing that to be a genuine sign of Christian hope in the marketplace it should be infused with three “orthos”: orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy - and that the greatest of these is orthopathy.

SPEAKER BIO

Rev. Dr Brian Harris is a sought-out speaker, teacher, thought-leader, podcaster, and writer. A respected theologian, after 17 years as principal of Perth’s Vose Seminary, in 2021 he became the founding director of AVENIR Leadership Institute. While leading the Institute, Brian continues with some part time lecturing, is a Director of the Australian College of Theology and a Distinguished International Visiting Scholar of Spurgeon’s College, London. He has published 7 books, the most recent being *Stirrers and Saints: Forming Spiritual Leaders of Skill, Depth and Character* (Paternoster, 2024).

KEY SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

**DR LYNNE
TAYLOR**

**Sharing faith, imaging
God, nourishing hope:
Faith and hope that is
relational, mysterious, and
transformational**

*Friday 28 March 2025
11:25am*



ABSTRACT

Churches are called to be places that support transformation and healing, for those both inside and outside the church. However, they have not always lived up to their calling. This, along with complex secularisation processes, has led to declining religious affiliation and declining Church attendance in Aotearoa as in other western countries. At the same time, many people remain open to spirituality and to exploring faith: some adopt the Christian faith despite not having been brought up in it. This session explores what churches and Christians might offer that is both faithful to the gospel and connective for those beyond the church. It emphasises the importance of communicating a faith and hope that is relational, mysterious, and transformational. Like the triune God, human beings are inherently relational and amid a loneliness epidemic, churches are uniquely able to be places of genuine connection and reciprocal care. Christians are invited to resist modernist tendencies to attempt to rationally explain every element of the Christian faith, and instead to embrace mystery and wonder, and to be honest about complexities – even uncertainties and doubts. A desire for personal and societal transformation can act as a motivation for faith formation as people see in God attributes they aspire to reflect. Emphasising a faith that is relational, mysterious, and transformational can both increase one's confidence in the gospel and bear good and lasting fruit.

SPEAKER BIO

Dr Lynne Taylor is the Jack Somerville Senior Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at the University of Otago (Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka). She is attentive to the contemporary mission and ministry context, and researches and teaches in these areas. Lynne's PhD explored why previously unchurched people become Christians today, and she continues to be curious about how God is at work in the world. She is currently exploring people's motivations for being baptised. Prior to (and in conjunction with) her academic role, Lynne has worked and volunteered in pastoral ministry, and engaged in congregational and denominational research. Lynne is married to Steve and they have two young adult daughters.