



ON A MISSION

EVERYONE DESERVES TO FEEL THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS.

ISSUE 4 2026

wellingtoncitymission
HEI WHAKAMARU O TE KOROWAI
O TE PANEPANE O TE IKA A MAUI



Keeping Christmas Traditions Alive at Kemp

Having joined us at Kemp Home & Hospital in 2008, Lorraine is our longest-residing kaumātua. Her sister, Evalda, shares what being part of the Kemp whānau has meant for their family.

My sister Lorraine has a lifelong intellectual disability, so she's never been able to look after herself. As she's got older, her mobility has gotten worse as well. She lived with Mum up until Mum was in her 90s and couldn't take care of her anymore. My house wasn't appropriate for her to live in, so she went to live with my daughter. Some time later, my daughter got very sick and couldn't take care of her. That was a pretty tough time, because all of a sudden, there was nowhere available for Lorraine to go, and it was like she was getting left out in the cold.

Then we found out about Kemp – and we've been happy ever since she moved in.

The staff are great, the rooms and food are really good, and Lorraine is very well looked after. She's always been quite feisty, but when she gets in a mood, the staff know how to handle it well. And you can tell Lorraine likes them because she's always yelling "Hi!" at the staff when they walk past us. Lorraine's actually changed a lot in the years she's been here, and she's a lot calmer now. I think



● Evalda speaks to us about her sister

that's because if she ever needs anything, a staff member is always there to help.

I live in Kāpiti, so I catch a train to visit Lorraine once a fortnight. Sometimes we fight like cats and dogs (we've always been like that!), but it's important to me that she knows someone from our family is here for her too. I really enjoy my visits because everyone is always friendly, and I can join in on the activities and community events, like a recent kapa haka group visit which was very entertaining!

Christmas has always been important for our family, right since we were kids, so I like being at Kemp at Christmas time. I can come and be with Lorraine for the party, and share the Christmas Day lunch with her. It's important to me that she has a good time and is with family because that's the way we were brought up – it was always Christmas dinner at mum's place. Our brother used to come too, but he passed away about five years ago, so I'm glad that between the two of us we've kept our traditions alive.



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I'd recommend Kemp to anybody. I might even come here myself later on too – although we'd probably be asked to leave with the way we are sometimes!

To everyone donating to the Mission and Kemp, do keep donating! It's a worthwhile thing to do and is money very well spent. You're keeping people who are going into their old age safe, and without it there would be a lot of people in trouble.

I can always go home happy, because I know my sister is well taken care of. She's happy, and she's safe.

Christmas is a special time for those who stay at Kemp Home & Hospital, because we truly are one big whānau here.

Our various Christmas activities throughout the season are topped off with a lovely Christmas lunch, where our staff eat with residents, their families, and old friends. It's a beautiful day for our community.



• MESSAGE FROM • MURRAY

Quarterly Newsletter - Christmas 2026

It feels like 2026 has disappeared in a flash! But despite the rapid passage of time, a number of significant things have happened this year. The Mission has been incredibly busy throughout the last twelve months as we have seen so many in our communities struggling with a number of issues, including housing and cost of living challenges, physical and mental health, and difficulties with relationships and connections.

We have also been reminded this year of the importance of giving all people a voice - particularly when they so often go unheard by local and national leadership, decision-makers and policy-setters. Hopefully we have used our own voice this year wisely and effectively to advocate for those who are impacted most by the decisions of others.

Much of this advocacy effort has been directed to opposing the Government's decision to legislate to give Police the authority to impose Move-on Orders, and the coalition's absolute unwillingness to make the critical distinction between people's behaviours and the circumstances rough sleepers find themselves in.

We have encouraged political parties in the lead up to the 2026 elections to be clear about their position on this legislation and their commitment to support those in our community who are most vulnerable. I think we should all be looking for political leadership that is wise, effective, evidence-based, inclusive, and compassionate.

The Christmas story offers us glimpses of poverty, homelessness, rough sleeping, and vulnerability. But most importantly, it is a story of hope, of love, and of inclusion. As you read the stories in this newsletter of Lorraine and Evalda, Wayne, and Rahwa and Naeb, you will be encouraged by the support, love, connection and acknowledgement they feel through their engagement with the Wellington City Mission.

Your generous support has enabled that to happen – so thank you!

As we journey together through this Christmas period, let us aspire for it to be a time of blessing and inclusion for all of us in our community.

And a Christmas blessing for you...

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child, be yours this Christmas.



Ngā manaakitanga – blessings

Murray Edridge
Wellington City Missioner, He Manu Taupua



I'm so Thankful for Whakamaru!

A regular at Whakamaru, and an advocate for our Christmas services, Wayne teaches sign language classes to manuhiri every week.

I was born deaf in 1954. My parents didn't sign to me, which made it really tough to understand what they were saying. So when I was five, I left our home in Hastings and went to School for the Deaf in Christchurch.

I would catch a train from Hastings to Wellington, then take the Wahine ferry to Lyttelton and catch the bus from there. Sign language was banned at school, and they gave us lollies if we could speak orally.

I left school when I was 15, moved to Wellington, and got a job cleaning at the zoo. I actually wanted to be a zookeeper, but back then I was told I couldn't because I was deaf. I have three grown-up children, but we are not really close at the moment, and four grandchildren.

I retired seven years ago when I turned 65. But after I finished working, I got quite lonely. A lot of my good friends from the deaf club passed away young, so I started going to the Mission when it was in Newtown. It was a great place to meet people, talk, and play cards. I love playing cards, and I love to win!

When Whakamaru was built, I started coming to Craig & Gail's Cafe every Tuesday and Thursday. I really like being here. I come for the conversation and feeling of connection, but I do enjoy a good flat white too! Everyone talks to each other, and there are other deaf people who come here as well.

Whenever I need help, the Mission is here for me. I've done shops in the Social Supermarket when I've needed it, I use the laundry service, and the staff help me organise other things like prescription glasses.



● Wayne plays cards in Craig & Gail's
& stands with support workers Denis & Holly (above)

One of the Mission staff, Tīpene, also recently helped me find my new home! It's lovely to have my own space, and I'm really thankful for the support with it.

Last Christmas I was invited to shop in the Mission Toy Store and pick presents to send to my grandchildren, which felt really good. I've also come for Christmas lunch, as well as during the public holidays when most things are closed. It's good that the Mission is here for people who are alone over Christmas, and I'll stop in here again this year.

I've started volunteering at Whakamaru, teaching sign classes every Thursday. It's great that I get to teach the language now, and I want to keep it going.

Without the Mission being here for me over the last few years, I think I would be very depressed now. Loneliness and mental health are big challenges for deaf people, and you get told you can't do things a lot, so some people just tend to stay on their own at home all the time. I can switch off my mind here and not worry about things. I feel like I have no problems when I'm here and that I'm part of something big.

I'm really thankful to God for this place. I want to bless everyone who donates to the Mission and to say thank you for your support. Everything someone needs to get by is here, and I'm really grateful for that. I want this place to stay open for everyone forever!



• THE CHRISTMAS SERVICES • YOU MAKE HAPPEN



Our Mission Christmas Toy Store and Social Supermarket are here for people and families who may not be able to do anything special for Christmas.

Hear below from Emma and Selena, who manage each service.

THE MISSION TOY STORE

A magical place for children and caregivers.

Emma manages the Christmas Toy Store at Whakamaru, a service that lets parents or caregivers choose new gifts and toys for their children.

The Mission Toy Store provides caregivers the opportunity to choose quality new gifts that their children will love. It's filled with new toys, books, games, clothes, other gifts, and even a wrapping station! Everything is donated by Mission supporters.

Similar to our Social Supermarket, when you walk in, it feels just like a shop, and our team makes it a welcoming and non-judgmental space. It also uses a points system, so caregivers can choose a number of items depending on how many children they have. This gives everyone a dignified, fun shopping experience and removes the stress of not being able to pay.

There are often a lot of really tough things going on for those who shop here. Many people in our community aren't in a financial position to buy gifts because they struggle week to week, and any money they do have goes toward their cost of living. Here, families can ease the heavy emotions and pressures tied to Christmas, and start to enjoy the festive period.

For caregivers, being able to choose a gift during a really hard time helps uphold their mana. You see a lot of relief, gratitude and joy, because they know their kids will have something to open on Christmas morning. And for tamariki, the meaning runs much deeper than the physical gift. They can experience that



EMMA

Project Manager – Strategic Operations



magic of opening a present that's been intentionally chosen for them by someone they love, and that makes them feel seen. If we can all make that feeling possible, even if it is just once a year, then that is significant.

People who come to the Toy Store may be working with our services, or they may be referred to us by other community organisations. Last year, over 2,000 children received gifts because of our Toy Store. For all of our donors, it's amazing to think how far their generosity spreads across the Wellington region.

We're really excited to do it all again this year at the Mission Christmas Toy Store. Thank you to everyone who donates and makes all of this possible!



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THE SOCIAL SUPERMARKET

Here to help with the basics - and something special at Christmas.

Selena is coming into her sixth Christmas at the Social Supermarket. She reflects on what this place means for people, as we come to the end of a tough year for many in our community.

Since we started the Social Supermarket, each year has seemed to get harder for people in Wellington. We're seeing more people come to the Mission for the first time because they can't afford rising food prices.

Christmas increases the pressures on people who may already be going through a tough time. Parents might be worrying about how they'll give their kids something special, while some whānau are simply trying to make ends meet and don't have much left over for Christmas.

Each year, we set up a special Christmas section in the supermarket, full of treats that help make Christmas feel special. That's awesome because, with items like a pavlova now costing \$15, the classic Kiwi Christmas meal is completely out of reach for a lot of whānau.

If a parent can arrange a Christmas dinner for the family, or even something as simple as their favourite biscuits, it can give them just a little break from the day-to-day hardships they're experiencing.

We make the supermarket feel festive but still respectful for everyone. Whatever someone's relationship with Christmas, our staff and volunteers make it a welcoming and mana-enhancing experience.



Kids are always so excited when they come in here! We've got a blow-up Santa, and an awesome Christmas tree! Over the years, lots of our volunteers have made their own decorations as well. It's really lovely when we all decorate the tree together.

You always see people feel such relief here, because whatever struggles they're dealing with, they know they will at least have some food at home.

Coming into the Christmas season and holidays, I always worry we won't be able to help everyone who needs us. But every year, even though times are harder for many, our community always comes together to support the Mission. That's so cool to see, and we so appreciate everyone who gives however they can!





● Rahwa and son, Naeb, outside their home

You Have Changed Our Lives

After fleeing to New Zealand from Eritrea and Sudan, Rahwa and her family of nine have overcome tremendously difficult times. The Mission has helped them settle in their new home, and restore some stability in their lives.

We are originally from Eritrea, there are nine of us, me, my husband and seven kids.

When my oldest son, Naeb, was 10, he touched an unexploded mine and lost all of his vision. That was very heavy. As a mum, I saw that he couldn't run around with the other kids his age anymore, or get an education.

In Eritrea, there is a lot of political oppression and not much opportunity. All 18-year-olds have to join the national service, and many are never allowed to leave. My husband was in the national service, and it didn't pay enough for us to survive as a big family. It is very hard to build a stable life there, and we wanted to properly check if it was possible to restore some of Naeb's eyesight. We decided to flee from Eritrea to Sudan in 2016 before any of our kids turned 18.

When we were crossing the border to Sudan, there were human traffickers in the area who were holding kids for ransom or taking their organs. Going together was too much of a gamble, so we split the family in half.

It was extremely difficult because, on the one hand, I wanted to have a better life for us, but as a mother, seeing my family broken apart really hurt my heart.

In Sudan, we didn't have any rights, so we didn't have enough to cover our costs, and there weren't many opportunities for refugees to work or study. Sudan was going through a lot of political instability with the civil war as well, and we still couldn't get a definitive eye assessment for Naeb.

Our uncle who lived in New Zealand encouraged all of us to move here together and start a new life. Because of Covid, it ended up taking seven years to get accepted. We moved to New Zealand in 2023, and the other family group came a month later.

Having my whole family under my care, and being able to hug them every day, was a different world. We felt very happy, but that's also when the housing crisis started. We stayed with housing providers like Sisters of Compassion and Tuatahi for a while, and they helped us a lot, but we couldn't stay there long-term. We were very low on the Housing NZ list, so we were waiting almost two years, and we were very nervous that we would end up on the street.

That's when the Mission got involved. Our new Financial Mentor, Jane, started putting in lots of hard work for us.





● Rahwa & Naeb at Whakamaru

Straight away, she started communicating with Housing NZ to help tell our story and get on the priority list. Soon, she was able to get us the perfect house in Newtown. It is close to everything we need, like the shops, our church, hospital, and schools.

There were lots of other big things the Mission helped with too. We were invited to shop in the Social Supermarket, and being able to choose your own food was really exciting and so important for me as a mother. They also gave us some brand new clothes and shoes. Naeb started studying Academic English at Weltec, but he was struggling with his laptop because it didn't have a voice assistant, so Jane applied for a grant and got the one we needed. Naeb couldn't believe it! It solved all his issues, and his reading and writing got so much better. All the help was very much appreciated, and we always knew if we had any problems we could just talk to the Mission.

Naeb was assessed by New Zealand doctors, and although the result was not what we were wishing for, at least he is in a position to do his best for his life. He wants to be a counsellor because he has received so much support from special people, and he knows how happy that can make someone. My older kids that have left school are studying and working, and the younger ones are all at school. My 13-year-old has made it very clear that she wants to be a lawyer! My husband and I are also studying English.

We don't come into the Mission any more because we don't want to take another person's opportunity who may be in a worse situation than us. But we know if we ever get into a desperate situation again, we can always ask for help. We have also been invited to shop in the Mission Toy Store this year, and we are excited for our first Christmas in our new home.

We thank God that we are here in New Zealand. When we think of the life we were anticipating, we feel so lucky. We have a stable life with no war, our kids are together and growing, and there are plenty of opportunities for them.

I will always remember the help we have been given. One day, when we are able, we will definitely give back to others in our position and lift them up the way the Mission donors have lifted us. You have changed our lives, and we really want to say, Thank You.



Over 2,000
tamariki

were provided with toys & gifts
in our Christmas Toy Store in 2025



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CHRISTMAS

AT THE WELLINGTON CITY MISSION



Want to support whānau doing it tough this Christmas? Read the insert included with this Newsletter!

Check out our Christmas Insert for info on our fundraising initiatives, and the mahi you're funding over the festive season.

LAST CHRISTMAS



Over 2,000 children were provided with toys & gifts in our Toy Store.



634 whānau received food support through our Social Supermarket.



3,171 lunches were served at Whakamaru last December.



1,182 star boxes were filled by generous Wellingtonians.



318 organisations participated in the Star Box campaign last year.



Around **200 people** were welcomed for a Christmas Day meal at Craig & Gail's Café.



200 Christmas hampers were distributed to families in the community.

A thank you to Mitre 10 MEGA Petone!

**MITRE 10
MEGA**
PETONE, UPPER HUTT & PORIRUA

HARD WIRED
ELECTRICAL LTD



Also thanks to
Jeremy at
No Job Too Small

Earlier this year, we approached **Mitre 10 MEGA Petone** regarding a new communal kitchen space for our Whakamaru residents.

We were amazed when **Mitre 10 MEGA Petone** offered to build our kitchen space, free of charge. They quickly brought in contractors who donated their time and expertise to build a beautiful, functional space for our rangatahi.

The result is a kitchen we couldn't be happier with, and a space that will benefit our residents and rangatahi for many years to come. A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to the new space!

FIND US

Street Address:
4-8 Oxford Terrace, Mount Cook, Wellington



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Contact us on (04) 245 0843 or
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If you ever want to make changes to your regular giving, just give us a call.

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Phone number: (04) 245 0900
Email: enquiries@wcm.org.nz
Postal Address: PO Box 7200, Newtown, Wellington 6242