

Reach Out

WINTER 2023

Winter on the streets

Feature Story
Saving people from the streets

Surprise thank-you
The singer talked from the heart

New redevelopment
Taking care to the next level



Christchurch City Mission

Te Whare Mīhana Ki Ōtautahi

Winter in numbers

Imagine looking down your street on a cold night this winter. The street lights shine on wet patches on the road and beyond them are shadows and houses with pulled blinds and curtains.

Then imagine **137** men and women shuffling slowly down the middle of that road in a long miserable line. That is how many homeless people we provided beds for last winter and will almost certainly care for again - if not more - this winter.

These are people who live in your community, your city. They deserve our care.

Winter is hard on anyone or any family who is only just getting by day to day. But perhaps the greatest impact is on people who

have nowhere to call home. We might worry about “the wood is running low” or “the power bill is crippling” but that’s nothing to the very personal stress of standing on the street as night falls in wet clothes and shoes, and not knowing where to go to get dry and to sleep.

In 2022, over June, July and August, those residents with us comprised of **94** men and **43** women. The women’s ages ranged from 24 to 53, while the men ranged from 23 to 66 years.

Some stayed briefly, and others stayed for weeks, but the average stay was **12** nights.

All received a warm, safe bed, hot showers, clothes and meals – **1,569** of these cooked by volunteers each night – and all

were assigned a social worker to help them plan a way out of being homeless.

Many of these people would have used our complementary services, such as the day programmes for companionship and learning and development courses, our addiction management services and our medical unit. Homeless people are often battling multiple problems.

Over those three winter months our Foodbank provided food to **2,312** families and individuals, including one person aged **87**.

Winter is hard but every year we are here to help get the most vulnerable people in our city to find a way through these tough months.

Thank you

Reach Out magazine is for those who support the Christchurch City Mission and a small way we can share the work we do with your support.

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We need your help this winter

I am so fortunate that I have never had to face a cold winter's night in an unheated home with empty cupboards, or even worse, spend the night in a damp sleeping bag under a bridge.

But I know people in our community do and I am sad to think that this is what they face every night – even today, as you read this magazine, they will be bracing themselves for another night in the open.

This is my second winter leading the Christchurch City Mission and over that time I have come to have a deeper appreciation of how much the Mission works to help people, I've seen how much need is out there in the community. Through countless meetings with groups and organisations and individuals, I have developed a great respect for the kindness and willingness shown

by our supporters. Our supporters are an integral part of what we do – without your support our vision and our desire to improve the lives of our community would be impossible.

This winter will be one of the hardest yet with the predicted cold and the deterioration of the financial position of many of our clients and their families, and consequently their decreasing ability to cope. Each day I hear examples of how times are tough for many in our city.

Here at the City Mission we are always pushing to improve our services and the way we deal with our clients. Each year we take on our role with enthusiasm, passion and commitment to helping those less fortunate than ourselves. We cannot do this by ourselves, but with your continuing help we can

be the team that strives to make a difference. The following pages will give you insight into the ways we support the homeless in our city. I am proud of the work that our staff do for the marginalised in our society.

Thank you to every one of you, our amazing supporters, who so generously help us. We need you as much as we ever have, to ensure that our clients can get through this winter. Your help truly makes a difference.

In Grace and Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Corinne Haines".

Corinne Haines
Christchurch City Missioner

Christchurch City Mission Services

Foodbank | Homelessness and Housing | Men's and Women's Emergency Shelters
Alcohol and Other Drug Addiction Services | Youth Mental Health and Addiction Services | Residential Detox
Learning and Development | Men's and Women's Day Programmes | City Mission Op Shops | Thrive Café
Community Support | Community Development | Back to School Programme | Financial Mentoring
Transitional Housing | Medical Unit | Social Worker Hub | Homeless Outreach

Saving people from the streets



Damien lived for many years on the streets.

Staying dry is everything for someone who is homeless and who is trying to get through a winter night sleeping rough on the streets.

Once wet, they can't get dry. Wetness makes it impossible to be warm no matter how many clothes are being worn.

So it's horrifying to hear one of our clients, Damien, talk about how sometimes in Christchurch he had freezing water poured in his sleeping bag while he was asleep on the ground.

The attackers, often drunk, think it is funny. Much worse can also happen to the homeless and it has happened to him, but he just shrugs and says being hassled is just part of the stress of living without a home.

At 21 when most young men are celebrating the beginning of adult life and all the possibilities, Damien turned to living alone on the streets. He had addiction problems, a growing criminal record (only for theft), and a deep sense of hopelessness at his situation.

"I'd burned all my bridges with family and friends and in my life at that stage it seemed to be the easiest option. I was getting away from people's expectations that I always be good, if that makes sense."

Damien has spent many years on the streets and many winters, and he's happy to help us tell the story of genuine homelessness in winter. We helped find him a house a few years ago after he spent 16 years homeless, so he's seen and experienced a lot.

“When I was sleeping rough, if the birds went silent, it meant someone was around...”

He’s also an example of how even those who have become most deeply enmeshed in the homeless lifestyle can be helped, if they want help, if enough time is spent with them and enough trust is developed.

All our clients suffer extra stress and discomfort in winter, but the hardest hit of all are the rough sleepers looking for somewhere to spend those long cold nights.

Homelessness in Christchurch is not what people think. Many beggars on the streets are not actually homeless and have a bed to go to at night. Their signs will say “struggling” rather than “homeless” because the street code means street justice could be meted out if they claim that falsely.

The instant image is of a figure in rags on a bench seat or sleeping in a doorway who has had a run of bad luck, but most often it is a symptom of much deeper and longer lasting problems. Mental health illness and trauma are the usual drivers and they go hand-in-hand with drug overuse and addiction.

Damien’s story fits this perfectly. He’s articulate and smart and has a strong personal code of honour, but a childhood that included sexual abuse, being raised in foster care homes, then a slide into drugs and addiction from age 13, led to a life in which he cycled through living in jail (for shoplifting) or sleeping on the streets.

Many years ago Damien first found out about the City Mission from a fellow streetie. The streetie saved

Damien after he tried to end his life in Cathedral Square because of guilt over some of his actions.

Our social worker Hilary looked after Damien, he slept in our emergency shelters, saw our addiction experts, got food from our Foodbank, received medical help, but stayed on the streets until four years ago when he finally decided to get a house and left the streets.

We are on the frontline in Christchurch looking after homeless men and women. Our Outreach Service patrols the streets regularly to check on them, to see what help they need, and to offer them a place in our shelters where we can really look after them well.

Our wonderful worker Josh says sometimes a lot of patience and time is needed to gain the trust of long-term homeless people who are traumatised, distrustful and often paranoid.

That’s why the simple just-give-them-a-room approach doesn’t work for the hardcore homeless and why taking the time to reach out to them properly and understand them is the most effective approach.

Damien has huge respect and appreciation for the time and effort the City Mission has given him and for the care provided by Hilary and Josh. But the hardness that comes from street living leaves deep scars.

Everyone on the street sleeps with their shoes on so they can move away quickly if they need to. Damien slept on the floor of his new home for the first six months because the bed was too soft and

even now after four years he still sleeps in his clothes and doesn’t lie under blankets.

“I have a thing now where I can’t sleep without sound,” he says.

“When I was sleeping rough, if the birds went silent, it meant someone was around and it would wake me up. That was my security blanket.”

But at least this winter he will spend the cold nights indoors and he remains truly grateful for the help he has been given.

How to help the homeless

We take a compassionate and informed approach to helping genuine homeless people in Christchurch.

This is how we recommend you interact with homeless met on the streets:

- Don’t give money.
- It’s okay to offer food.
- It’s kind to make eye contact and say hello.
- Call our Outreach Service on 0800 787 855 or email us at outreach@citymission.org.nz if you want to make sure they have been offered help, or if you are a business and they are sleeping outside your premises.
- Call 111 if you have serious concerns for their health or that harm may come from their behaviour.

We want to take our care to the next level

A little while ago we were excited at seeing our new buildings popping up on the northern side of our Hereford Street complex. Now we are delighted because they are all up and running this winter.

First, we opened our famous-in-Christchurch community café last year, then our innovative, fully supported transitional housing building opened at the beginning of this year, and this month our innovative self-serve Foodbank is now operational.

Plus we have opened a new Central City Op Shop in Barbadoes Street just a stone's throw away from our Hereford Street sites. We have replaced the old ramshackle buildings and old ways of doing things with a new community-type

village and a new modern approach to transforming lives.

A good example is the new Foodbank where clients will be adjusting to choosing what they have in their food parcels instead of being handed a box.

This is a major change for them and for us.

It is a Foodbank unlike anything Christchurch has seen before because we went right back to the basics when planning it. We knew that when you build a new facility it is a rare chance to re-design everything from scratch.

Of course we have always been good at taking in food donations and getting the food to people who need it in times of crisis, but we

wanted to do that differently and offer a Foodbank experience that had more dignity.

We also know that people who choose their own food are likely to eat more of what we give them. So it's a more efficient way of meeting a family's needs.

We hope that over time the self-serve model will be used by at least three-quarters of our clients, while the rest will continue to use our traditional pre-packed boxes.

The City Mission has always been innovative and adapted to meet the needs of our community and that's why we are still here after 95 years serving the most vulnerable people in our city.



Our new Foodbank has shelves just like a supermarket.



The work inside these new buildings will transform lives.



City Missioner Corinne Haines, centre right, and Careforce members enjoy an afternoon together.



Mahalia Simpson stole her own show with words of thanks.

The singer sprang a surprise

You could hear a pin drop when the lovely young woman on the stage shared her story.

We had asked singer Mahalia Simpson to perform a few songs for our regular Careforce donors at our annual “thank you” event and she had done this wonderfully. She’s a well-known Christchurch singer with a lovely, mellow jazz style and she had filled the room with her rich golden tones.

That wasn’t surprising because her music background includes being a high-profile contestant in Australia when she appeared on X-Factor coached by Dannii Minogue.

But when she came to the stage for her next set of songs she paused, excused herself, and said she wanted to make a few personal comments.

We didn’t know what was happening. Our supporters fell quiet and looked up from the tables.

And over the next minute Mahalia showed how closely our community is connected and how deeply our work with vulnerable families reaches into our communities.

She grew up in Aranui and the City Mission had been so important to her family in hard times.

“Speaking on behalf of my family, and my extended family and friends who have used these services, I’d just like to say thank you again,” she told the room of our supporters.

“I’ve got kind of plenty of aunts and uncles that use these services still to this day, and they are much better off because of them, so thank you.”

We had no idea of her link to us. Afterwards she said she

remembered going into City Mission op shops with her mother for clothes and hiding because she was embarrassed, and worried school friends would see her.

She went on to say only a few years later she was op shopping because it was fun and trendy.

Mahalia’s final song was Sam Cooke’s *A Change is Gunna Come* which she said was appropriate for how the City Mission changed lives.

If you have thought about joining our regular giving programme, Careforce, please contact our team for more information or to sign up on enquiries@citymission.org.nz



Nurse Julie Brine loves her work at the City Mission.

A smile for everyone

“I’m a smiley person, I’ve always smiled,” says Julie Brine, our wonderful community mental health nurse. And she breaks into one of those smiles she literally can’t help.

She works very closely with the homeless people who come into our emergency shelters and it’s hard to over-estimate how much Julie’s smiles and reassuring calmness means for the stressed, worried, frustrated people looking for help.

Julie came to the City Mission after working at the specialist mental health facility Hillmorton Hospital, she wanted more face-to-face contact with clients.

“I just really enjoy people,” she explains.

“What I find really uplifting, and what makes it a privilege to work here, is that people share themselves with me. It’s a trust thing.”

She assesses our emergency shelter residents for physical and mental

health, helps where she can, and connects them to other doctors and experts (including our own City Mission experts) when needed. She also organises a roster of 9-10 GPs who voluntarily come in once a week in the evenings to give professional advice to our men and women emergency shelter clients.

“Besides working in the shelters, I have my door open through the week for anyone who wants to pop in off the streets. Most of them are in crisis, a lot is mental health and people going further and further into stress. There’s a lot more anger and frustration out there now,” she says.

She’s not on her own here, she works very closely with our three other City Mission nurses, who work in our addiction services. Julie says they make a very strong team.

They need to be, we are looking after people who come in with increasingly complex, multi-layered problems.

Julie says her goal with the shelter clients is to have all their physical and mental health needs met at least to the point they can leave knowing how to move forward positively.

Foot problems are a common physical problem, especially in winter and with our older clients. People with mental health illnesses often walk long distances every day because it helps calm their agitation, but in bad weather with falling apart shoes which are always wet this can quickly cause problems.

We provide showers, laundry services, fresh clothes, socks and shoes, meals, so once they come under our wing we can help get them back on track.

Julie says she enjoys that every day is different, even if the problems are often the same, the people are different and so are the solutions they need.

“I love my work here,” she says. And there’s that lovely smile again.

From our supporters

It is really heartening when our donors value our work.

“My contribution pales in insignificance compared to your work, CM team. Please take a moment to reflect on how amazing your mahi is and be proud to be an important part of our community.”

Legacies are a way supporters can make a long-term commitment to our work. It comforts them to know they have left help for others.

“This gift is in memory of my uncle ... Thank you City Mission for all the important work that you do, and which my family very much appreciate.”

Telling you what we are doing with your gifts is very important to us.

“Thank you for the lifeline of Reach Out, keeping us in touch with the heartbeat of the Mission. Much appreciated for rural folk.”

All our supporters deeply care about others.

“I hope this will help a bit for the people who go without. This should not happen in New Zealand. Thank-you to all people who help at City Mission.”

It's the journey not the destination

One foot after another, 61-year-old Matt Rose trod carefully down the 1,400km gnarly backbone of the South Island earlier this year.

It took him 68 days and he raised nearly \$250,000 for 10 handpicked charities to share equally.

Some of our supporters go to extraordinary lengths to help us and Matt's effort is right up there with the most committed.

He is a Queenstown investment manager but he has a deep connection to Christchurch and the Christchurch City Mission through his education and family's connections.

He calls us a Christchurch stalwart and he particularly admires how we care for people whose basic care issues are complicated by serious mental health illnesses.

Matt says he's faced his own mental health challenges and the Te Araroa Trail walk was a way to clear his mind as well as do something for others.

Each day exhausted him physically and mentally. *“It was an unreal experience and I loved every minute of it. Importantly I finished, but I felt completely refreshed and invigorated and alive,”* he says.

He talked to trampers he met about why he was backing his charities and that helped to remind himself about people such as our clients who he was doing the walk for.

But he will never forget how awed he was by the views appearing in front of him every day. *“I was blessed to see our back country at its absolute finest.”*

— Matt Rose walked the walk when it came to helping others.



New Worlds help our Foodbank

Foodstuff’s national Family2Family campaign, where customers buy groceries to support foodbanks over two weeks in April-May, saw over 3500 bags donated to us here at the Christchurch City Mission. Foodstuffs also matched the bags with a money donation. We really appreciate this support and this food was special because it was the first food to fill the shelves of our new self-serve foodbank. Our Social Services Manager Zucchi Leonard said *“we have more confidence now we will be able to supply food parcels to those in need over the next couple of months. The difference a campaign like this makes is very significant to our supplies.”* We’d like to send a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who took part in this campaign.



City Missioner Corinne Haines and Social Services Manager Zucchi Leonard with some of the donated Family2Family bags.

Changes in our mailed packs

You may have noticed a couple of changes in this Winter Reach Out mail pack. We have been reviewing some of our processes and methods to reduce administration costs and an obvious choice to be more environmentally conscious is to now include the donation form on the back of the letter. That way we reduce our paper use and costs. But there is one change we need your help with.

If you donate via bank deposit or direct credit, we hope you can assist us by placing your relevant information in the bank fields shown here. This helps us find your donation faster and helps us to be more accurate. It will save us time and money and makes sure we get your receipt to you in a timely manner.

We appreciate some of you are already doing this – thank you! And to those of our donors who will assist with future donations – thank you, too! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to let us know on enquiries@citymission.org.nz.

BAYLEYS

**ALTOGETHER
BETTER**

Cans for our cause

We have been cheering when the ball is kicked out on the full at Crusaders games this season. Don't worry, there's a good reason why we love it when the game is stopped that way. Our good friends at Bayleys Canterbury have run a Catch a Can campaign at the home games and for every kick out on the full, Bayleys pledges 200 cans for our foodbank, which needs all the help it can get. We are looking forward to a big final total. This is one of two "can" campaigns run for us by Bayleys Canterbury and keep your eyes peeled for the "Bring What You Can" campaign run out of Bayleys offices across Canterbury. We are very grateful for their support for our foodbank.

Prayer Power

Prayer for those who are cold

Lord, as winter's cold nights keep us in our warm homes, and we share the warmth and safety with our families, we give thanks for our fortunate circumstances. But as we look out into the darkness, it's with sadness that we know there are others within our community who are not blessed with a home such as ours. Please lead them to the City Mission's services and let the Mission's caring staff help them find security over the long cold months.

Prayer for the elderly

Heavenly Father, let your strength and love flow into the work of the City Mission staff and volunteers as they help the elderly in our community who are coming to the Mission in increasing numbers. As they turn to the Mission for food, warmth and company, let the elderly know we care and we will treat them with dignity and respect.

Prayer for the struggling

Lord we pray for those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Teach us to be ever mindful of those who are weary with the relentless struggle to just keep alive, for those who are looking for a healthy meal and a comfortable bed, and those who barely have the necessities of life. We ask that you guide them to the welcoming staff at the Mission.

Prayer for the children

We pray to you Lord that the children of families cared for by the City Mission are not left damaged or anxious and depressed from the stressful circumstances the adults caring for them are facing. Children have the right to grow up in a loving and supportive home. As their parents and guardians turn to the City Mission for help, let the children feel the love and compassion flowing from the community towards their parents and their family.

We see small miracles every day

Small miracles ... that's a phrase we hold dear at the City Mission because while we see a lot of sadness and stress, we also experience some wonderful moments too.

And you never know when and where they may occur.

One recently came at The Warehouse and the effects rippled out to a deserving family even though they will never know it.

We have a programme where we provide uniforms to children from families who are going to school without the proper clothes and gear.

One of our social workers, Steph, was standing at the checkout counter to buy some uniforms at The Warehouse for one of our families when a woman in line behind her asked if she was from a school.

Steph said no, she was from the City Mission, and the clothes were going to a family which needed help.

The woman pulled out her credit card and insisted on buying the clothes then and there. Steph explained we had fundraised for them, but the woman continued to insist and wouldn't give her name and didn't want any recognition. She paid the \$571.

The next day we gave the uniforms to an overwhelmed and grateful mother and her two children are now wearing them with pride at school this winter.

It was a lovely example of how we are so often the link between those who care and those who need care. Thank you to the kind woman in The Warehouse.



**Christchurch
City Mission**

Te Whare Mīhana Ki Ōtautahi