

Justin & Jennifer Cherry
Auckland, New Zealand



My name is Justin, this is my family and New Zealand is our mission calling. My wife is Jennifer and we have been married for 21 years. We have a daughter named Rylee (15) and two sons named Gavin (12) and Zane (7). Jennifer is creative and has a gift for hospitality. Rylee is our artsy girl who loves drawing, writing stories and has found a new talent and passion in architectural design. Gavin is our athlete. Although he loves all sports, basketball is his major passion. Zane is our little energizer bunny. From the time he gets up till the time he crashes at night he is full on. We love our little family and are excited to be growing up together in Auckland. We were part of a team of three families that planted Discover Church in Auckland, New Zealand in 2008. We have been in this country, we call home, for almost 13 years. Our love for the

South Pacific started when we participated in the HUA program with Harding University in 1998. We have laid deep roots in this country and feel we fit right in this culture. We know this is where God wants us.

Overview of Discover Church

The best way to describe our work in New Zealand is to see us as a gathered and scattered movement. We believe in giving our best in all areas of our ministry. A lot of time and effort goes into our Sunday missional group services and other programs so that people feel comfortable and find themselves in a safe environment to hear the message of Jesus Christ. But just as important we believe in activating believers to go out into their communities and be Jesus in every aspect of their lives. Jesus' life was all about pointing people to the Father and showing them the way by following him. We strive to do the same. We provide outreach areas for people to find God, such as, our food bank The NorWest Care Trust, our project to under-resourced families called The Back2School Project, or our teen program called Chocolate Socks. But we ultimately feel it is deep relationships that will draw people to Christ. We do this by having people constantly in our homes for a meal or through our weekly lunch catch ups called DC3s.

The purpose of this mission is to bring Jesus into every aspect of our daily lives. To move at the speed of life helping people find their way back to God, becoming followers of Jesus who journey in helping others follower Jesus as well. To create safe places for people to find God, build relationships and restore community.

We planted a church to help people find their true identity that is found in Jesus Christ and to grow in their likeness of him. It is our goal to see healthy national leaders created to guide New Zealand into the next stage of building a discipling culture.

Stories of Hope

Love Your Neighbor

This year has been hard for many. When COVID went into full force throughout the world, New Zealand made the choice to lockdown tight for 4 weeks, which turned into 8 weeks. During this time all we were allowed to do is go to grocery stores and walks, unless you were an essential worker. This caused many to struggle with anxiety, depression and loneliness. What I saw happen from the members of Discover Church was so Christ-like and beautiful. We have spent years teaching that one of the most effective things we can do in the name of Jesus is love our neighbors. Over the years we began to imagine what if Jesus meant your actual neighbors. During this lockdown we heard story after story from people who had decided to bless their neighbors in different ways. Some made them dinner or ran to the grocery store for them. Some organized little spaced out block parties, where everyone stayed in their drive but talked. Others talked about having dinner with their neighbors, one on their deck and the other family in their driveway, to maintain social distancing. These actions led to many conversations about how God is with us even in the darkness and it is his people he is using to show the community the light. These small acts of kindness have led into some deep friendships, which have also led into the name of Jesus being talked about more and the journey to a relationship with him has begun.

Waiting Patiently For God

Another area of hope has been around the school our children attend. We have spent many years ministering to this school, even though the leadership team was very against any sort of religious communication happening within the school. We simply loved people, listened and served. Due to a specific and tragic event, the school reached out for me to do some grief counseling for the leadership team, faculty, students and their families. God opened up a door we never could have imagined walking through. I now have a deep relationship with the school, have been able to openly talk with the leadership team, faculty, students and their families about Jesus. The school has been using me more to help with leadership organizational structures and I use much of the principles Jesus taught when doing my workshops with them. For all the times we felt like giving up, God showed us that he had plans for his amazing creation and all he asked of us was to be patient and trust. Faith and God's power make an awesome combination.

Leadership Development

The area of leadership development within the Church is one that has always been a challenge in New Zealand culture. An area that God has been moving within our Church is in those willing to stand up and lead. When we think about our members, majority area still new Christians or journeying toward God. We have a few people who have been Christians for more than 10 years, but that is the few. We have been spending time individually and in small groups equipping the members for acts of service and leadership development. Seeing God unleash our members' talents to become leaders in different areas of our Church has been a faith testament to behold. We have begun the process for the potential of deacons and even have a member in mind to potentially become an elder soon. This is something we have been praying about for a long time and to see it happen is so exciting.

Open Doors in the Community

Our two major outreaches into the community are the Back2School Project (<http://back2schoolproject.nz>) and the food bank we operate, The NorWest Care Trust (<https://www.foodbank.co.nz/norwest-care-trust-foodbank>). With the food bank we operated straight through lockdown because we were seen as essential workers. So many people were hurting and we were able to deliver hundreds of food parcels to families in need. With each food delivery we have been able to share the love of Christ in practical ways and many times have been able to share the Gospel with families as we deliver parcels to them. This year one of our clients gave their life to Christ after having a volunteer share the Gospel with them. This is something we have dreamed about since arriving in New Zealand. When the day would come that others in our group would feel the desire to share their faith with others. With the Back2School Project, our goal this year was to help 150 students, of under-resourced families, throughout 3 schools receive backpacks and stationery for the 2021 school year. Due to partnership in the community and with local churches, as well as, the generous donations of individuals, we were able to meet the needs of over 150 students and their families and help 5 schools instead. At the "Playground Party," where they will receive their full backpacks, we will have over 400 people which includes their families. At this event we will have the opportunity to share the love of Christ through word and action with every person that attends the event. It is a great opportunity and we are praying for Christ's lead and presence.