

Prayer in the Centre

Linda Grigg [Used with permission of Love Your Neighbour](#)



While Browns Bay shoppers browse for bargains at their popular Sunday market, just metres away people are praying earnestly.

The Christian Prayer Centre is located right in the CBD of this North Shore, Auckland seaside suburb. Seven days a week, pray-ers gather at the Centre in four-hour shifts of two people at a time. They are there to offer a listening ear and intercession for anyone who walks in off the busy main street seeking help.

The Centre was the vision of Elizabeth Busse, a member of Long Bay Baptist Church, although Elizabeth herself gives all credit to God, both for the idea and for “getting it into place” about eight months ago.

Although the pray-ers come from various local churches, the financial support comes largely from donations, which Elizabeth says are always welcome. Long Bay Baptist Church also budgets \$5000 annually towards the centre's weekly costs of around \$620.

“I have been amazed at the number of people who come in for prayer,” says Long Bay Baptist's Senior Pastor, Rodney Duncan.

“Elizabeth, I think, thought that they would stream in; I was much less optimistic. But there are folk every day who come, and some days quite a number. Some are church goers who like prayer from someone outside of their local church, others identify themselves as Christians who no longer go to church, and there are those who are non-Christians but figure they have 'nothing to lose'.”

Elizabeth says it takes a certain kind of pray-er for this work. They are not there to counsel, and even though many obviously appreciate the Centre's presence in the community, there has been some spiritual resistance.



“One woman came in and put a curse on the large cross on the Centre wall,” says Elizabeth, citing some examples of opposition. “One man vehemently makes his feelings known that he doesn't want us there, and once an eight-year-old boy was prevented by his parents from taking literature from the centre because it had a cross on it.”

However, the spiritual victories outweigh any obstacles. Elizabeth understandably wishes to preserve people's privacy, but when pressed for some highlights says the Centre has seen people freed from suicidal impulses, addictions and bondage to former cult involvement.



“We have had visitors to church who have come via the Centre, and one definite convert who is attending regularly, and keen to join our next Alpha group,” says Rodney.

“Perhaps the greatest advantage for the church is simply giving us a definite community focus, being the church in the community. Our actual church building is on the edge of our suburb but the Prayer Centre is in the shopping centre, so it makes Christianity visible. At this point it is

not advertised or 'labeled' as part of Long Bay, but simply the Christian Prayer Centre,” he says.

“ Another benefit is that some of the pray-ers have had to really leave their comfort zone to pray for strangers, and that must be good for their spiritual growth. I believe that it is the most exciting thing that we have done for some time, as it is really offering the community Christian prayer and faith.”

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