

## Pritika Goulstone – Food Church

Alternative service at 4pm on the 3rd Sunday of every month, Wellington South Baptist Church.



Kia ora everyone,

For the last wee while, we've been running an alternative service once a month. It looks different – we greet each other over afternoon tea, and we sit around tables instead of pews, for the service and we eat dinner together as well; my 4-year-old daughter aptly calls it food-church.

To begin, Scripture is read out loud and time given to share what we are grateful for and/or lamenting that given week. The person leading the service then introduces a topic to inform the activities which follow. For example, this past week our topic was hope. We were introduced to the practice of Kintsugi, a traditional Japanese art form of repairing broken pottery with a special sticky sap that is often mixed with a precious metal, such as gold. The resulting piece of pottery carries in its new identity, both its brokenness and newfound beauty, born from a labour of love. Around our tables we were invited to rebuild a puzzle depicting a piece of Kintsugi pottery and to share our reflections on the art and activity. It is incredible to me, what simple activities like this tells us about God at work in our lives, what resonates and what doesn't with our own experience. It is special to me that my 4-year-old daughter actively participates in the activities and in the discussion, her lens for seeing the world is so different to my own, and her natural ability to acknowledge the ineffable nature of God is humbling for me. It's remarkable also that she engages with some of the activities so much, she asks to bring them home, and her learning and mulling over the activity continues randomly through the week. As we close, we pray for each other, and then rub shoulders washing dishes and stacking chairs.

It is definitely still a work in progress and continuously evolving, however some of the thinking behind it boils down to being more inclusive (intentionally intergenerational, children for example can actively participate in the activities and discussions; building

relationships with people we don't necessarily sit next to on a Sunday morning; and to be more welcoming of people who may be unfamiliar with a more traditional/typical Sunday morning service); it is informal (there is no hard and fast structure, questions and conversations are welcome, interruptions from children are common, for example, in the middle of the service, the children stepped out and returned with totally new outfits from the play room and musical instruments); it is a testament to the priesthood of all believers (space is made for each person, no matter how small, to share and reflect on what God may be saying, doing, showing or helping them with); and space is made to serve one another, whether it is sharing a meal you prepared, making someone a cup of tea, or helping put tables away at the end, there is an inherent culture of gifting each other our time and attention.