



St Marks Newsletter

September 2019

How it all began

St Marks service started from small beginnings in 1987 as a "drop in centre" and temporary shelter for young people who were homeless, disadvantaged and sometimes suicidal (often as a result of alcohol and drug use); or who were in trouble with the law. The Nelson Dioceses of the Anglican Church leased their decommissioned church site at 61 Main Street to facilitate this service. With a lot of initiative and support from several individuals and the Community, the service grew. A decision was made to concentrate on clients with alcohol and drug dependence issues; to provide secure accommodation and to develop a structured therapeutic programme.

Our philosophy/method

The philosophy of St Marks is "**The Family that Changes**" and the primary aim of the St Marks TC (Therapeutic Community) is to foster enduring personal growth and long last recovery.

TC's offer a range of evidence-based treatments within a therapeutic environment. These include: counselling, behavioural treatment approaches, recreational activities, social and community living skills, group work and relapse prevention. TC's emphasise a holistic approach to treatment where residents and staff participate in the operation of the community and where the community itself has a role in the change process, contributing to a psychologically and physically safe learning environment where change occurs. The TC approach moves beyond the residential service into continuing care within the community to support reintegration. The lived experience in a Therapeutic Community testing new beliefs and attitudes and ways of being is the vital ingredient to a sustainable treatment experience.

St Marks is a member of the ATCA (Australasian Therapeutic Community Association)



St Marks Provides

- ✚ Adult Residential Treatment Programme
- ✚ Adult day Treatment Programme
- ✚ Supportive (Social) Detoxification
- ✚ Continuing-care Service (individual and group sessions)
- ✚ Adult Residential Treatment for Private clients
- ✚ Regular Whanau support group sessions in collaboration with Supporting Families and Care Marlborough
- ✚ Brief Drink Driving Courses in Nelson, Greymouth and Westport
- ✚ EAP Counselling sessions
- ✚ 7 days a week—24-hour support by on-site staff

St Marks staff are professional, well trained, but most of all.....
We don't give-up on people and will support them to find a better future for themselves, Whanau and the Society

St Marks is a member of Platform Charitable Trust



St Marks Facility

The iconic church building itself now operates as a Living area, Library/Computer room with a new extension accommodating a large dining area and modern professional kitchen.



St Marks can accommodate a total of 20 clients at any one time. The accommodation consists of one block for mixed gender, 6 bedrooms and male/female bathrooms and a stand-alone cottage to house women clients only. The room which used to be known as the Hobbies/Group room has been converted into a large open office space for the Clinical Staff, RN, Volunteers and Student Placements. The Centre has a well-equipped gymnasium. The space around the Centre is well utilised providing outdoor seating and recreation areas. The newly established orchard is producing fruit and clients have recently built raised garden beds for growing vegetables. In September 2010 St Marks purchased the adjoining property at 63 Main Street which is utilized for senior resident's accommodation purpose.

Where we are now

In August 2018 the much-anticipated multi-function room was officially opened. This building is named the Koru Room and it is a wonderful space used for many activities including meetings, therapy & education sessions, yoga, art and music therapy and meditation. One of the important consequences resulting from the building of this room has been the opportunity to rationalise the available space at St Marks.



How we are funded

Thanks to all our funders and supporters who make it possible to support people in need and to help them to change their lives and the lives of their Whanau. Thanks to the Nelson/Marlborough District Health Board, the Department of Corrections our main funders. St Marks is also financially assisted by the St Marks Charitable Foundation, and by donations from funders and supporters including Rata Foundation, Blenheim South Rotary Club and many other groups and individuals, some who wish to remain anonymous.

St Marks and the Community

St Marks Management team are involved in many community initiatives and have a strong focus on collaboration with other Services. Housing First collaboration is one of them, this new initiative is managed by Christchurch Methodist Mission in partnership with St Marks, Gateway Housing Trust and Maataa Waka. This collaboration is aimed at ending homelessness in Blenheim by 2021. The Service will support people for at least two years who are street sleeping or who are chronically homeless with high and complex needs. Housing First aims to support people into stable long-term housing of their choice. It is expected that over a four-year period at least 80% of participants will still be in continuous housing, attaining their own personal goals and reporting other positive changes in their lives.

Referral Information

Practically all of our clients come via referral from the Community Alcohol & Drug Services in the South Island (funded by the District Health Boards). We also receive referrals from several South Island NGO's who are funded by the DHB's. We are able to consider private, prison and OST clients.

The following is a brief description of our referral process:

- + Referral is received – we require a recent AOD Comprehensive Assessment plus any relevant supporting information – Psychiatric Reports, Corrections Information etc. or when applicable our staff is performing a Assessment
- + Our Clinical Team decide on suitability for the St Marks Programme
- + If found suitable for our programme the referral is accepted and a KW (Key Worker) is allocated to work with the referrer and client. The KW will ensure we have all the relevant information before an entry date is allocated, this includes duration of programme (discussed with KW, Referrer and Client). Our programme is from 8 – 15 weeks with the option to apply for an extension if required
- + Referrer and client will be advised of entry date – detox arrangements can be made
- + Pre-admission paperwork is emailed to referrer with a due date for return. The KW will follow up on all pre-admission requirements and ensure the client is on track for their entry. Our Registered Nurse will ensure medication prescriptions are in place for each client

After Care

St Marks offers all clients who have been in treatment the opportunity to stay in contact with the service. For those who live locally, there is an After-Care Group. These meetings occur fortnightly and give those attending the opportunity of face to face contact/support. Some local past clients return to St Marks for one-on-one counselling support. Others are able to keep in touch with the staff by phone, text or St Marks Facebook. This is a closed group and clients can only become a member through invitation from a staff member. The page has grown to 178 members since its inception in 2013. It is good to acknowledge that St Marks is still in contact with clients who completed their treatment over a year ago and longer.

Narrative derived from client contact

St Marks realises the importance of continuing care and keeping in contact with past clients. There are contractual reporting requirements to be met but we also acknowledge the importance of offering aftercare support to all clients whether they leave our service as a graduate or as an unplanned discharge. We make contact at 3, 6 & 12 month intervals and ask each client a set of 8 questions. We also ask for their feedback and offer support for those who may be struggling in the community.

To give an example of a survey completed early 2019: Contact was made with 45 clients of which 40 (88%) reported having a positive experience at St Marks and these 40 clients also reporting they now have healthy relationships. Only 2 clients rated their current health and life-happiness as low, with 49% stating Good and 29% stating Excellent. 66% of these clients were engaged in employment and 33% answered no to being engaged in employment. A standout on this survey was that 91% reported they had no legal issues in this period. Regarding lapses 25 clients (55%) reported not experiencing any lapse whereas 10 clients reported having 1 only lapse and a small number (5) had several or ongoing lapses. We ask about the client's housing situation and 2 clients reported they were not in a good situation, 4 reasonable, 22 Good and 15 Excellent.

And the Future

The last phase is to plan a new accommodation building (10 bedrooms each with an ensuite bathroom). This phase of the development of St Marks will include re-designing open spaces between the buildings for easy access and to create a natural flow between each building. The entire complex is to be regarded as one facility and all the separate buildings will give the feeling of being connected. The underlining factor is to improve the client's stay while they are at St Marks. For instance, the Board want the original building on the site (the Church) to be a feature building with an inviting atmosphere where the clients feel comfortable. The Board has asked to receive the Architect's draft visual profiles by its October 2019 meeting.

David's Story:



Growing up as a kid in Hawkes Bay, I never had aspirations to be a homeless, drug addict, alcoholic. Who does? But there I was, arriving at St Marks in October 2015 still shaky from withdrawal, and knowing that this would be my last chance at life.

I honestly had no friendly place to go.

For over a year I had pretty much been unemployable, constantly sick, and the worst kind of company, since I was usually intoxicated by 10am. Yet, more tragically - I had also lost the trust and respect of my family and friends. They had given up on me a long time ago, I was pretty sure they thought I was on my way to an early grave. To be honest I was dead certain of that also.

So, I had no idea what to expect when I walked through those doors at St Marks on that warm Spring day. I remember being pretty sick both physically and mentally. And terrified. Yet what followed was four months of what can best be described as an upheaval of everything I had come to believe – namely those beliefs that I was a worthless person, incapable of love or doing anything with my life.

Behind those doors at St Marks I was introduced to a long-lost feeling of joy, pride, respect for myself and others, as well as a feeling I had never much had before; gratitude. When I left St Marks, I started life with that foundation of gratitude – because I was lucky to be alive and have the chance to start over again.

Today, I believe my life has changed forever. I am a successful full-time business owner and have forged new long-lasting bonds with my family and friends (who now look up to me as an inspiration). And I also managed to go back to school and pick up a post-grad degree along the way (a PhD in fact, yes, I am a Doctor now).

More auspiciously, this July I celebrated four years of sobriety. I seriously believe that without St Marks I wouldn't be alive today. This little haven in Marlborough saves lives. It not only saved mine but gave me a better one to live.

David James

