

New Church Plant for Stratford, January 2026: Prospectus

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PUBLIC MEETINGS AT SKINNER HALL, STRATFORD A&P SHOWGROUNDS, FLINT ROAD, STRATFORD

7:30pm, Thursday October 16

7:30pm, Sunday October 19

7:30pm, Friday October 24

7:30pm, Monday October 27

SGM I: 7:30pm, Tuesday November 11

SGM II: 7:30pm, Monday November 24

In the heart of Taranaki is the town of Stratford, named for the birthplace of William Shakespeare, its streets named after characters of Shakespeare's plays. The main street lined with majestic oak trees, with a beautiful Tudor-style glockenspiel clocktower standing tall in the town centre, where Romeo and Juliet appear 4 times a day to reaffirm their vows of love to one another.

Here the Thespian themes of Stratford are juxtaposed on a landscape of bustling agricultural activity, in a community that loves rugby football, motor sports, hunting, fitness and crafts. This is a community with a strong work and community ethic, and a love for the land, that rests alongside a cultural window into the roots of modern English culture and heritage. A window back to the world of Shakespeare, when Puritan Christianity dominated and shaped the English world, and propelled the British Commonwealth and the Anglosphere into greatness.

When, in 1877, Stratford was surveyed, that same muscular Christianity was a driving force of strength to many of Stratford's pioneer settlers, those forefathers we look back upon with such pride and admiration. As with most New Zealand towns, churches dominated the townscape, physically and politically. But as with many New Zealand towns, attendance at many of these churches has dwindled over time, and sadly many churches are no longer the towers of strength they once were. Some have disappeared altogether. Some new churches have come and stayed, while others have come and gone. And yet there remains a vast field of human souls not in the visible fold of God's kingdom, of whom it is God's desire that none should perish, but that all would come to repentance.

The dwindling of the church and the false starts that have come and gone go hand-in-hand with a change of attitudes to much of what the bible praises and teaches, regarding how we are to gather and walk together as Christians. Whether faithfulness to the doctrines and creeds of Jesus' divinity, the atoning nature of his death, and his resurrection and awaited return. Whether a neglect of the demand for repentance from sin. Whether a neglect of the power and practice of the Lord's Supper, and of reverence and humility in public worship. Whether a neglect of church discipline, of training in discipleship and evangelism, of faithful giving to the church, of attentive pastoral care, of righteous engagement in politics and culture. The trend in all of these things has been downwards.

It is time to arrest these trends and turn them on their head. It is time to do a new work that will set these dials in the right direction, and to keep pushing. To celebrate the great doctrines and confessions of the faith. To preach repentance from sin. To be deliberate and intent in discipleship and evangelism. To embrace the need for church discipline, for faithfulness in giving, for righteous engagement in politics and culture.

If this is your vision for the church in Stratford, then the January 2026 church plant may be for you. Maybe you can help the church you are in already to dial things up. Maybe you can't, and this church plant is an opportunity for you to deploy the convictions, vision and gifts that God has given you, to grow and nurture his church. Perhaps you haven't even been in church for years, or ever, but you know you need to turn your life wholeheartedly to God, to the good news of Jesus, and to fellowship with his people, the church.

In the last quarter of 2024, we will be hosting meetings to discuss a proposed church plant with those who are interested. Please consider and pray about whether what the Lord has laid on our hearts is something you know he is calling you to, and please do come along and learn more.

May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering!

Distinctive Values Of New Church Plant For Stratford in January 2026

1. **#1:** Commitment to help Christians and the church in Stratford to **Mature** into the full stature of Christ, according to the **Whole Counsel** of God, under the **Authority of Scripture**, while bearing graciously and patiently with one another as we exhort one another on to love and good deeds.
2. Commitment to organised and proven **Evangelism** and **Pastoral Work**.
3. Commitment to **Theological Education** and **Discipleship Training**.
4. Commitment to **Biblical Counselling Ministry** to help people to live holy lives.
5. Commitment to **Discipleship Bands** providing exhortation to Christian maturity.
6. Commitment to **Biblical Morality**, and to tackling major matters of immorality in our age, such as honouring that marriage between man and woman is the only sexual relationship approved by the Bible, and such as repenting from immorality, pornography, homosexuality, transgenderism and abortion, being cautious about contraception and divorce, and repenting from stinginess, gluttony, consumerism, workaholism, materialism, immaturity and sports/fitness fanaticism.
7. Commitment to **Health and Wellbeing Ministry** that honours our bodies and promotes, good health, wellbeing, manners, hygiene and fitness, while ministering to and in brokenness.
8. A high view of the place and power of the **Preaching of the Gospel**, promoting **Regular Evangelism** and including gospel preaching in every Sunday morning service.
9. A high view of the place and power of **The Lord's Supper**, and of **Hymns and Singing** (old and new, rich in theology), with weekly practice in every Sunday morning service, and with a reverence and respect that is reflected in behaviour and dress, with modesty and **Sex Differences** respected and honoured.
10. Respectful of biblical requirement that **Men Lead** the church, the home and the state.
11. Acknowledging that the bible requires **Head Coverings** for women in public worship, while being gracious with regards to personal practice, acknowledging the complexity of cultural clash in this space.
12. Respectful of different views with regards to eschatology, appreciating the attention to detail and explanatory power of **Pre-Millennialism**, the optimism of **Postmillennialism** and the sobriety of **Amillennialism**.
13. Respectful of different views with regards to the use of **Sign Gifts**, while requiring that any such use is conservative and discreet, and in proper order, for the certain edification of the church; recognising that much of what is seen in churches today is out-of-order.
14. Respectful and accepting of different views regarding **Baptism** and **Communion** for children, accepting infant baptism, believers' baptism, baby dedications, first communion & confirmation..
15. Respectful of **Reformed Theology and Creeds** (See endnote ¹), yet critical, and not requiring total adherence, accepting that conclusions must unambiguously conform to scripture and not be contentious to those who have fair evidence they are reading scripture faithfully. Respectful and appreciative of the manifestation of Gospel power and truth in **Every Denomination** that God has used to correct a church out of balance.
16. Accepting that the Church, not the state, is God's primary agent of effective **Education, Health and Wealth Redistribution**, while preserving the preaching of the Gospel, discipleship, pastoral care, biblical counselling and charity as core business.
17. Accepting that the Church is to hold the government to account for effective service as God's secular instrument of justice, and that the church and its leaders will express **Political Views** and political convictions, including resisting state intrusion into matters the church and family have sovereignty in.
18. **Commitment to Dialogue** where Christian convictions are challenged, while protecting the **Sanctity Of The Pulpit** for the diligent and conscientious preaching of Holy Scripture.
19. Clear, transparent, protective, accountable and democratic **Governance** and **Financial Structures**, governed by **Elders** with biblical qualification, elected by **Church Membership**, with paid preaching and pastoral position(s), with remuneration reflecting workload, and with positions being generally bi-vocational, until workload and finances permit **Full-Time Roles**, exhorting members to **Generous And Disciplined Giving**, accepting that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.

- i. Respectful of all Reformed confessions and creeds without requiring total adherence:

Ie. Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, 39 Articles (1571), Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), The London Baptist Confession (1689), American Westminster Confession of Faith (1789)

The following are also accepted by the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (146 churches in USA) and likely merit acceptance:

Definition of Chalcedon; Belgic Confession (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Canons of Dort (1619), The Savoy Declaration (1658), Second Helvetic Confession (1566), The Reformed Evangelical Confession (2011).

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (55 churches in Australia/NZ) adopt a statement of faith that likewise stands respectfully in relation to all of these confessions and creeds.

Placeholder Name: **Christ Church, Stratford.**

Placeholder Venue (booked): Skinner Hall, Stratford A&P Showgrounds, Flint Road East, Stratford

Catchment (20 mins): Stratford District (10,400 people), Inglewood (3,950), Eltham (2,150), Kaponga (370)

Proposed Church Fellowship Pattern:

Sunday

9:15am Choir Practice
9:45am Prayer meeting
10am Worship service
11:15am Morning tea
3:30pm Discipleship Class

Monday

7pm Monthly elders & deacons meeting

Thursday

7pm Fortnightly bible study & discipleship bands

Friday

7pm Weekly Youth Group

Road To Church Plant:

October 2025

1. Communicate and promote church plant goals and plan and advertise special meeting 13/10/25
2. Hold meetings for those interested in church planting goals and plan Thu 16/10/25, Sun 19/10/25, Fri 24/10/25, Mon 27/10/25

November – December 2025

3. Hold special general meeting for those interested in church planting goals and plan 11/11/25
4. Elect committee for managing & incorporating church plant society 11/11/25
5. Plan church plant, and associated events and activities.
6. Adopt constitution & elders 24/11/25
7. Incorporate Society

January 2026

8. Church plant pre-launch meetings 4/01/26, 11/01/26
9. Church plant launch 18/01/26
10. Church Discipleship class launch 25/01/26
11. Church Youth Group launch 30/01/26

Books to Preach Through

- Matthew, Genesis, Exodus, Hebrews, Isaiah, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Deuteronomy, Romans

Discipleship Training Programme

Part 1: Christian Faith

- CREATION: God the Father, Jesus Christ & The Holy Spirit (Gen 1, John 1, Col 1)
- FALL: The human condition (Gen 2 & 3, Gen 6, Gen 11, Ex 20, Rom 1 – 2)
- INCARNATION: Emmanuel (Matt 1); The great high priest (Hebrews)
- REDEMPTION: Salvation from condemnation and death by grace through faith in the atoning blood of Christ (Hebrews, Rom 3 – 5)
- GLORIFICATION: Salvation from the power of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6 – 8)
- CONSUMMATION: Hope of the return of Christ and extermination of evil (Acts 1, Rev)

Part 2: Christian Life

- PRAYER: Worship, praise, thanksgiving, petition, intercession, solitude, fasting, direction.
- BIBLE STUDY: Literary genres, inductive bible study, exegesis, meditation, bible reading plans (Psalms, Matt 4)
- HOLINESS: Living by the law vs living by the spirit (Matt 5 – 7, Gal 2), spiritual warfare (Eph 6)
- CHURCH: Christian family, church attendance, spiritual friendship, spiritual direction, Catechesis & confession, liturgy, The Lord's Supper, church discipline
- MINISTRY: Prayer, pastoral care, evangelism, teaching, almsgiving, service, mission
- VOCATION: Church-based vocation; doing secular work Christianly

Part 3: Christian Mission

- KINGDOM OF GOD I: People of God; image of God; Dominion & stewardship; Cultural mandate
- KINGDOM OF GOD II: Power of the Gospel; Christian confession & testimony
- ESCHATOLOGY: The prevailing church; antichrists & beasts
- SERVANT LEADERSHIP: Cruciform living; strength in weakness, humility
- EVANGELISM: The law and the gospel; preaching; proselytising; testifying, anointing
- POLEMICS & APOLOGETICS: Exposing idolatry; defending faith, political engagement

Books to use

The Bruised Reed (Sibbes), Christ Set Forth (Goodwin), The Mortification of Sin (Owen), Communion with God (Owen), The Saint's Everlasting Rest (Baxter), The Reformed Pastor (Baxter), A Method for Prayer (Baxter), The Christian's Great Interest (Guthrie), A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists (Wesley), Holiness (Ryle), Thoughts for Young Men (Ryle), The Cost of Discipleship (Bonhoeffer), Life Together (Bonhoeffer), Preaching and Preachers (Lloyd-Jones), The Puritan Hope (Murray), Biblical Preaching (Robinson), How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth (Fee), Disciplines of a Godly Man (Hughes), Fruitfulness and Faithfulness (Wilson), Future Men (Wilson), Tactics (Koukl), The Class Meeting (Watson), Gentle and Lowly (Ortlund), Surfing for God (Cusick)

Planter bio: Allan Chesswas, Stratford NZ.

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FAMILY: Married to Nia Chesswas 15 years, with 6 children aged 14 to 1.

EDUCATION: Bachelor of Resource & Environmental Planning, Massey, 2003. Diploma of Biblical Studies, Laidlaw, 2010. Studied Philosophy at Victoria 2009 & Auckland 2010.

WORK: Environmental Planner with Harrison Grierson 2004, New Plymouth District Council 2005 – 2006, Stratford District Council 2006 – 2008, Self-employed Managing Director of Renaissance Consulting, environmental planning consultancy, since 2008.

MINISTRY: Christian since 1999.

Evangelism Coordinator 2000 – 2001 & President 2001 – 2002 Massey University Christian Fellowship. Bible Study leader at The Street, Wellington 2004, Holy Trinity Anglican Stratford 2006 – 2008, 2011; Mountainview Vineyard Church Stratford 2012 – 2014. Children's church leader at citywestchurch New Plymouth 2017 – 2019; Vestry at Holy Trinity Anglican Stratford 2007 – 2008, 2011 – 2012 and Manaia Community Church 2019 – 2021; Bible-in-Schools instructor 2015 – 2019; Chair of Eastern Taranaki Christian Association 2019 – 2021, 2025; Chair of Theological Roundtable New Plymouth 2022; Lay preacher at Stratford Bible Baptist Church 2022 – 2025; Chair of Stratford Gospel Collective 2022 – 2025.

