



WILLOW CREEK ASSOCIATION NZ

It's Very Busy on Main Street!

Have you noticed? The number of seminars, workshops and conferences on offer in any given year these days is huge, especially for a small country with a small Christian population like New Zealand.

According to my brief research there are somewhere between eight and ten national conferences hosted by independent groups every year, and growing. Add to this the national conferences of most all denominations. Then add in a smorgasbord of local offerings especially in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Next, a bunch of niche events of one kind or another e.g. music, missions, sport, justice etc., not to mention the growing number of Bible Colleges and online offerings, and you end up with a dazzling array of seminar and learning options.

This has been a vexing issue for me. WillowNZ is adding to the mix. We are contributing to the busyness and overcrowding in the seminar and conference market in NZ. We are, to put it candidly, in competition. We are competing against our brother and sister organisations for the limited amount of time and money available for seminars and conferences. As troubling as I find this, it is what you get in a 'free enterprise' economy.

So here is how we have thought this through:

1. I believe that professional development (PD) is critical for an organisation's growth and sustainability. Most boards and CEO's of companies, schools, hospitals, etc. know this and allocate a significant percentage of their budget each year to PD. Reflecting on my own working life, I have benefitted a great deal from a range of different seminars, workshops and conferences over 40 years. I can point to a few such occasions as life-defining and very transformative. True, more so in the earlier days of vocational life, but most always valuable in terms of new learnings and insights not to mention the networking opportunities. In fact, I wish more churches would invest more money in PD for their pastor(s), elders and staff.

2. Willow Creek Association is a non-denominational and international ministry that is now in 105 countries of the world. It has been around a long time and thankfully has gained a very good reputation as a provider of relevant, excellent leadership training and development. We want to keep building on that reputation here in NZ. We are committed to Christian leaders wherever they may be leading.
3. There are a number of conferences that are very successful in drawing large numbers of like-minded people for the purposes of corporate worship, inspiration and fellowship. They are more generic in content. Although we are supportive of all those initiatives, our focus is different. We have a priority commitment to knowledge acquisition and skills development. **For us it's all about the learning.**
4. Because of this, attendance numbers at our training events by definition will be lower in number, giving those who attend an opportunity to probe the subject matter and interact with the presenter(s) on most occasions.

So in 2015 we are offering by way of Professional Development the following:

- * Briefings on the new Health and Safety legislation, in partnership with Gaze Burt.
- * An evening for Christian business leaders, with Mark Powell and Rob Hennin.
- * A one day 'live stream' seminar on *Emotionally Healthy Leadership* with Pete and Geri Scazzero.
- * A mini-seminar for Christian leaders and a public meeting in six cities in June on *Understanding Islam*, with Dr Mark Durie from Melbourne.
- * A mini-seminar for Christian leaders in six cities in September on *Belief Blockers*, with Karl Faase from Sydney.
- * Two Justice and Compassion Gatherings targeting 20 to 30-year-olds.
- * The Global Leadership Summit 2015 in October and November in eight cities.

Please go to our website for more information: www.willowcreek.org.nz.

All our training events are open to all leaders wherever they may be leading.

Alan Vink
CEO-WillowNZ

