



## Te Hao Nui- LAUNCH OUT LETTERS (LOL) September 2023

When he had finished eating, he said to Simon,  
"Launch out into the deep water and let down your  
nets for a catch".

Luke 5: 4

Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand  
Journal and Newsletter for Lay Leaders and Ministers

Welcome to the September issue of LOL!

September is a month we celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, the Social Justice week, the Nativity of Mary the mother of Jesus and Holy Name of Mary. We don't have a specific article on Mary but the message underpinned by all the articles reflect God's justice, faithfulness and her own courage to open herself to the mysterious journey of redemption.

We have a guest contributor for the Gospel reflection for the 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time. **Mely Lau** is the current Coordinator for Marriage Ministry and was formerly a Launch Out Candidate (we hope she can come back at some point). Her reflection focused on the first part of the Gospel on how Jesus wants us to deal with conflicts. Many of us, myself included, are averse to conflict. Conflict is a disruptor and can come in different ways; some are subtle, while some are obvious. The articles for September address the uncomfortable conflicts of our time. The greatest conflict of humanity is the one we have waged against the environment. **Catherine Gibbs'** article invites us to reflect on the climate crisis with Pope Francis, through the film *The Letter*, which is based upon the message of *Laudato Si*. **Margaret Bearsley** shares an interesting piece on the memoirs of Walter Cizek, SJ who spent most of his life incarcerated in the labour camps of Siberia. War is the extreme expression of conflict, and the hardest to address. In her article, Margaret unfolds the deepening of Cizek's inner peace amidst his tribulations. Finally, we have **Bridget Taumoepeau** who shared her speech during the recent Conference of Major Superiors of the Pacific Islands held in Fiji, where she was invited to share on the place of the laity in the synodal journey. When we look at the message of the gospel on reconciliation, we can see that the synod is no less than an application of the teaching of Jesus.

All reconciliations require us to change--to take a step forward from our well-guarded position; and when we do, we are transformed. It is not easy individually, not as communities or countries. Not even for Church. We ask for the grace to be like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to be boldly open to the change that will be required of us.

*Maya Bernardo*  
Formator & Manager, Te Hao Nui- Launch Out Programme

### Healing Hearts 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

By Mely Lau  
Marriage Ministry Coordinator  
Church Mission, ADW



In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus imparts invaluable wisdom in the art of reconciliation for Christians. Jesus begins with urging us to address conflicts privately. He also exhorts us to approach our brothers and sisters with genuine concern, seeking to understand and resolve the issues that may have arisen, instead of harbouring bitterness or seeking retaliation.

I encountered a challenging situation that put the teachings of Matthew 18:15-20 to the test. It was a conflict that weighed heavily on my heart, threatening to rupture a cherished relationship with my brother. My brother is a year older than me. As we grew into our teens, we discovered that we had vastly different personalities, which caused many misunderstandings with small disagreements escalating into full-blown arguments. When I was around 13 years old, we had a big fight over a small lolly. We shouted at each other,

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and in the heat of the moment, my brother pushed me harshly, causing me to hit my head on the wooden frame of my bed, consequently injuring me. I cried bitterly but he did not seem to care. Mum and Dad were not around at that time, and both of us felt deeply hurt. This incident caused us to harbour anger and hate, leading us to stop talking to each other until we reached the age of 27.

Bitterness, hatred, and unforgiveness towards my brother not only lived within me for almost 15 years but also crept into the life of my family. Mum and Dad were unable to reconcile us, and their frustration with the situation further strained communication within the family. Home was no longer a place I wanted to be in.

Carrying the burden of this unresolved tension, I joined a charismatic prayer group when I was twenty-five, hoping to find solace and redemption. The words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20 resonated with me, urging me to address the conflicts in my life directly and to seek reconciliation. I knew I needed to take the first step, but fear and pride held me back. However, I could not ignore the call to mend our relationship any longer, and I resolved to follow Christ's teaching.

Gathering my courage, I reached out to my brother and invited him to attend a Life in the Spirit Seminar which I am helping organised. I knew he was conservative in his faith, but to my relief, he agreed to come. During the seminar, our hearts softened towards each other as we listened to the teachings, opened ourselves up for healing, and conversed with empathy. A mentor at the seminar guided us through the process of exchanging forgiveness. It was an emotional and humbling experience as we confessed our wrongdoings, forgave one another, and felt God's presence envelop us.

Since then, our relationship became better. Not only did we restore what was lost, but our bond also became even stronger and more resilient. Consequently, the joy of our reconciliation extended to our parents as well.

The personal experience of reconciling with my brother taught me the true power of Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:15-20. It showed me that seeking reconciliation with a humble and compassionate heart can lead to redemption and restoration. Most importantly, it reinforced the significance of communal support and God's presence in guiding us toward healing and unity within the Christian community.



*"...For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20.*

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## **BIRTHDAYS**

September



## ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Food for Faith** <https://foodforfaith.org.nz/>
- **The Letter** <https://www.theletterfilm.org/watch/> . The Letter tells the story of a journey to Rome of frontline leaders to discuss the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* with Pope Francis. Catherine Gibbs strongly recommends this movie in her article at pages 3-4.
- **Summary of *Laudato Si*** <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/whats-the-best-2-page-summary-youve-seen-of-laudato-si/>.
- The Archdiocese of Wellington has the **Ecology Justice and Peace Desk** which is at the forefront in engaging with parishes in bringing to life the wisdom of *Laudato Si*. Get to know them better <https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/about/commission-for-ecology/laudato-si-in-the-archdiocese/>
- **NZCBC Season for Creation Celebration Guide** for ecumenical prayer service <http://www.nlo.org.nz/assets/EN-SoC-2023-GUIDE-v2.pdf>
- **Mary our Inspiration by Kieran Fenn, fms** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBlhP4tynDA> and an explanation on the **Nativity of Mary** <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/liturgical-holidays/feast-of-the-nativity-of-the-blessed-virgin-mary-.html>
- Videos from Joe Green
  - ◇ Pope on Marriage <https://youtu.be/rwNa7rY5oCg>
  - ◇ Pope on how to argue in marriage <https://youtu.be/Dc1-eWyy1DQ>



By Catherine Gibbs  
Pastoral Mentor

### Am I Becoming a Good Ancestor?

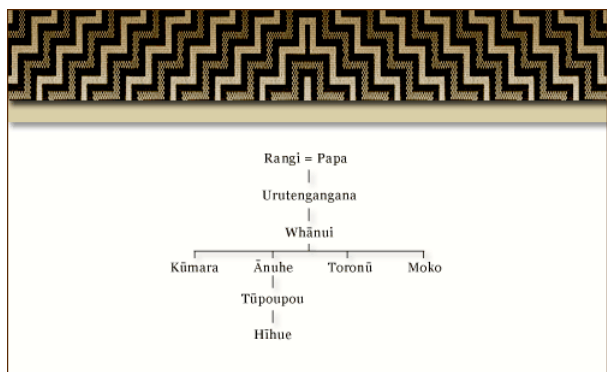


Image copied from <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whakapapa/13900/whakapapa>

*Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis' letter to the world published in 2015. It has been described as a self-help project covering a spectrum of complex issues. The primary message of *Laudato Si'* encourages us to see how everything is connected.

Building on *Laudato si'* the Vatican released last year, a documentary film *The Letter*. This was the Catholic church reaching out by bringing together science and faith together, in a way that serves humanity, to face one of the greatest challenges ever to confront human life. The film uses cold statistics to wake us up and shares the real stories of five people from around the world, who come together on a transformative journey to Rome and beyond using the "Pope's media

megaphone." I urge each of you to view *The Letter* at least once for the following reasons.

#### Undergo an ecological conversion.

The number one issue of our time is rapid climate change and biodiversity loss. Pope Francis calls on "all people of goodwill" to undergo an ecological conversion, which means moving toward a greater love of God, each other, and creation by acknowledging our contribution to the ecological crisis and acting in ways that heal our common home. We can discover God in both the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick, aware that the life of the Spirit is not disassociated from worldly realities.

#### Support the call to build alliances.

Our response to the climate crisis is an exercise in human relations – internationally, nationally, and locally. As the scientist in the film states "It's not what I know and what you know. It's what we know together." We need to work collectively and build alliances. We must do this at the local level and grow from there. Why can't we use existing networks of schools and parishes, and use social media to gather alliances that will help us mitigate and

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### Create hope.

We create hope by creating meaning. *Laudato Si'* is a letter that creates meaning, and the film visually enhances that meaning through storytelling. We can “see and hear” the cry of the poor as disasters ruin their livelihoods; feel the fear of the young generation as their homes burn and watch with dismay as fragile ecosystems are destroyed. We gain insights into how technologies can provide key information to help us understand what is happening and devise solutions.

### Touch the sacred.

*The Letter* uses the power of inspiring video clips to show the awesome beauty of nature “where the veil between heaven and earth is gossamer thin.” We are re-introduced to St Francis’ ‘Praised Be’ prayer providing a transcendent reason to care for all creation.

## What might be some implications for Ministry?

### **Can you identify closely with one of the protagonists in the film?**

A young man from Senegal – Voice of the poor; an Amazonian chief from Brazil – Voice of Indigenous people; a teenage Hindu girl from India – Voice of youth; two scientists from Hawaii – Voice of wildlife.

How might you live out your ethical responsibility at the local level with one or more of these voices at the peripheries?

### **Can you organise a screening of *The Letter* in your parish?**

It’s easy to do and support is available online to make it a success.

Arrange for the 90-minute film to screen, followed by a discussion over a cuppa.

Might this become a step toward everyone’s eco-conversion?

### **What does it mean to become a good ancestor?**

Try expanding our time horizons to confront the great long-term challenges of our age. We have to understand how the natural world has kept its offspring alive for ten thousand generations and more by creating conditions conducive to life.

Right now, that is our design brief. To respect the intricate relationships that sustain the web of life. To notice how everything is connected.

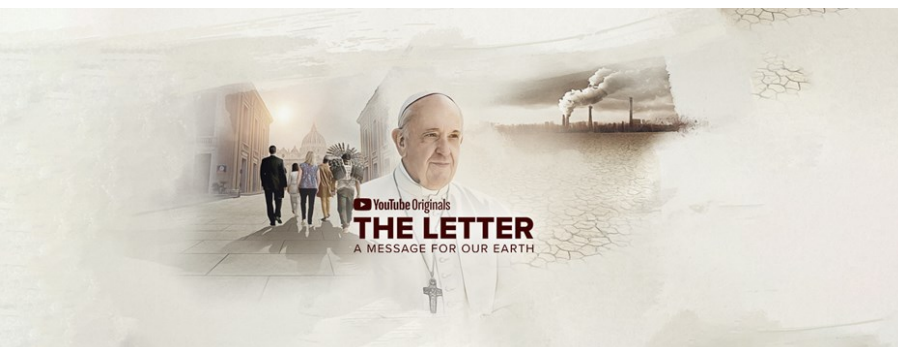
Another way to become a good ancestor is to envision the lives of our young ones stretching into the future beyond our own. When they are old who will they be? What will their world be like? How will they look back on us, and what we did or didn’t do when we had the chance?

“The power of whakapapa can become part of our imaginations, helping to shine a light on the great chain of living, dead, and unborn that extends unbroken through time itself.” Krzrnaric, Roman. ‘The Good Ancestor.’

### **Managing this change of era**

Pope Francis commented that we no longer live in an era of change but that we are living in a change of era.

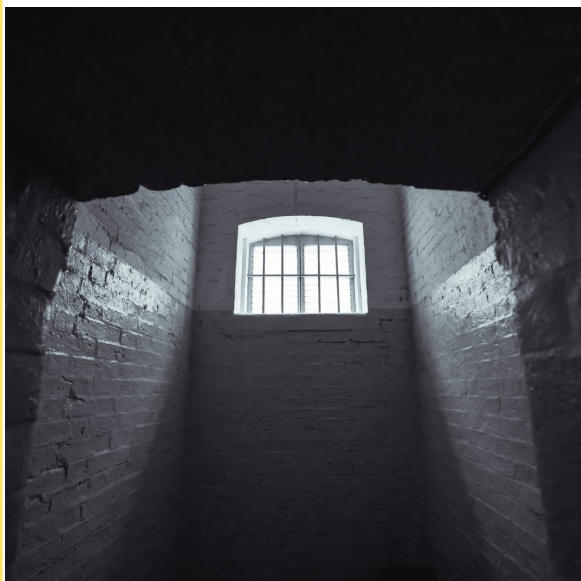
What are some examples of this enormous change in your own life and the life of your parish? While the central teachings of our faith remain sure, our understanding of what Jesus desires for us is constantly growing, and how we share and communicate that must mature as well.



Watch The Letter <https://www.theletterfilm.org/watch/>

## Holiness in the Here and Now: Insights from the life of Walter Ciszek SJ

By Margaret Bearsley  
Launch Out Candidate



One of 18<sup>th</sup> century French Philosopher Blaise Pascal's famous quotes from his *Pensées*, runs something like: *All of humanity's problems stem from our inability to sit quietly in a room alone.* It sounds easy enough to do, and for an introvert, it also sounds inviting. But I realise that, even though I enjoy living alone, I fill the silences with a 24 hour News channel on TV left going in the background, or with music, unless I am absorbed in a book, or writing emails or some other activity which may be noiseless, but is effectively the opposite to sitting in silence, alone.

I bought the little memoir of Walter Ciszek, SJ (1904-1984), *He Leadeth Me: An extraordinary Testament of Faith*<sup>1</sup> on the basis of a podcast I had listened to by Bishop Barron. I don't remember what topic, but BB recommended the book as essential reading for the spiritual life. And it's funny, not funny, how things come into your life at a time when you need them whether you know or not at the

time, that the thing should be in your life.

And that very point is, more or less, the lesson contained in this very easy reading 208-page memoir of a Jesuit priest who opted, as part of his formation and then when newly ordained, to join Pope Pius XI's Russian mission not long before the commencement of World War II. The memoir relates the ordeals faced by Ciszek as he was almost immediately captured, after the invasion by the Red Army of Poland in 1939, as a "Vatican spy" and spent the next 23 years of his Russian apostolate in Soviet prisons and the labour camps of Siberia.

The blurb on the back of the book could make one suspect that there is nothing for the comfortable middle-class-lay person of New Zealand to gain from reading about Ciszek's "unflagging faith which enabled him to survive the ordeal that wrenched his body and spirit to near collapse" and "how it was only through an utter reliance on God's will he managed to endure". But rather than being in the genre of the hagiographies that I grew up with as a child where other-worldly martyrs had their skin flayed off or faced lions or gladiators or boiling oil, Ciszek's story, particularly in the early chapters, focuses on the spiritual lessons he learned during five years of solitary confinement—lessons that are readily applicable to a comfortable middle class layperson struggling to sit quietly in a room alone.

In the early chapters, where the story covers Ciszek's solitary confinement, one year of which involved almost daily interrogations about his 'spying' activities, the lesson for us all lies in his own lesson from failing at the crucial moment—when his choice was to either sign the mis-quoted transcription of his interrogations that had him admitting to being a spy, or face execution; he capitulates and signs. Ciszek explains candidly his discerning of God's will through prayer and reflection<sup>2</sup>:

*"Back in my cell, I stood shaken and defeated. ... I was burning with shame ... My prayer at first, though, was a matter of reproaches ... for failing to refuse to sign the dossier. ... And I did not spare God from these reproaches. Why had he failed me at the critical juncture? Why had he not sustained my strength and my nerve? Why had he not inspired me to speak out boldly? Why had he not shielded me by his grace from the fear of death? ... Little by little, surely under his inspiration and grace, I began to wonder about myself and my prayer. ... Slowly, reluctantly, under the gentle proddings of grace, I faced the truth that was at the root of my problem and my shame. The answer was a single word: I. ... I realized, finally, that I had asked for God's help but had really believed in my own ability to avoid evil and meet every challenge. ..."*

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The lesson for comfortable and free- middle- class- me from this part of the book, was in reflecting on my own experiences as God's conversation and grace, with and for me.

The real turning point for Cizek, that some of us might readily relate to, came in turning to God in prayer after having sunk into utter despair as the interrogations dragged on in Lubianka Prison. From page 79 through 85 Cizek recounts the conversion experience of God's response to his desperate prayer: consoling thoughts about Christ's agony in the garden and ultimate act of total abandonment and submission to the Father's will.

At page 81: "Now, with sudden and almost blinding clarity and simplicity, I realized ... God's will was not hidden somewhere "out there" in the situations in which I found myself; the situations themselves were his will for me. What he wanted was for me to accept these situations as from his hands, to let go of the reins and place myself entirely at his disposal". And at page 83: "I chose, consciously and willingly, to abandon myself to God's will, to let go completely of every last reservation ... and the result was a feeling not of fear but of liberation, not of danger or of despair but a fresh new wave of confidence and of happiness."

The rest of the memoir is Cizek's reflections on living out God's will for him in the situations of his life, in every 'here and now', every encounter with fellow prisoners and with the merciless guards, and experiencing the joy of his apostolate in Russia, not as Pope Pius XI had necessarily envisioned it, but as God willed it.

Cizek himself sums up how this abandonment to God's will can be enjoyed in each of our daily lives. For example, in the third to last chapter of the book, from page 182:

*"We for our part can accept and offer back to God every prayer, work, and suffering of the day, no matter how insignificant or unspectacular they may seem to us. ... Between God and the individual soul, however, there are no insignificant moments; this is the mystery of divine providence. We see examples of this in lives around us every day." ...*

This little book of abandonment to God's will has much in common with St Thérèse of Lisieux's *Little Way*. By seeing my day to day situations as God's will for me, and endeavouring to be Christ, to be Love, to the other, in the moment, it is like sitting quietly in a room alone. In a room alone with God. *'Not my will, but Thine be done'*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>(Image: New York, 1995)

<sup>2</sup>Extracted from pages 70 – 75

<sup>3</sup>Luke 22:42.



# UPDATES

## LEARNING DAY WITH JOE GREEN



Last 19 August, Joe Green, Lay Pastoral Leader of Ohariu Parish, ran a Learning Day. Joe showed us a glimpse of his ministry on the ground as Lay Pastoral Leader. He gave a reflective and practical exploration of his roles in preparing parishes for the sacraments of Baptism, Marriage and supporting people through the Bereavement Ministry.



We also thank **Robyn Randomski**, coordinator of the Bereavement Ministry of the Ohariu Parish who shared her experience in journeying alongside people in times of grief. **Lucienne Hensel** of Church Mission also joined us for the day and provided us with the yummy soups for lunch.

## The Long Journey

By Bridget Taumoepeau  
Pastoral Mentor

*Below is my speech delivered during the Conference of Major Superiors of the Pacific Island (CMPSI) Assembly, Suva, Fiji, 29 August- 01 September 2023. I slightly redacted it for the purpose of LOL.*



The Conference’s theme was “Towards a Synodal church: A journey of hopes, dreams and difficulties.” This theme brings to mind the long journey we are in. Such a journey did not just begin with the instigation of discernment called upon by Pope Francis on synodality last 2021, but it’s genesis traces back to Vatican II, with which the synod is inextricably linked.

What is important to me is that this journey will not just lead to a Synod of Bishops in Rome, but will involve everyone – the people of God – including us in the region of Oceania - a gathering of people from small communities across the vast area of the Pacific. It will help us to be intentional Catholics, contributing to our communities as well as strengthening our personal faith.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* (the preparatory document for the Synod meeting) starts with a quote from Romans 15 – “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I think that is why we are here – to think in harmony to promote the purpose of a synodal church – communion, participation, and mission.

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The link with Vatican II is important, especially the acknowledgement by the Council, in *Lumen Gentium*, that the Church is hierarchical, as well as, in the same document stresses the promotion of the role of the laity. In Chapter 4, it states “everything that has been said of the People of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy.” Perhaps we should emphasise the word ‘equally’.

Pope Francis has continued to emphasise the fact that baptism is what binds us together, whatever our subsequent vocations. He reflected, on the sacrament of baptism as “the foundation of Christian life.” He said, baptism “is the door that permits Christ the Lord to make His dwelling in us and allows us to immerse ourselves in His mystery.” The Council stated that all baptised believers possess an instinct for the faith, referred to as the *sensus fidei*.



The Council also issued a specific “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity’ called *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. It is interesting to read in that document, published in 1965: “A sign of this urgent and many-faceted need (referring to the need of the church to make its presence and action felt) is the manifest action of the Holy Spirit, making lay people nowadays increasingly aware of their responsibility and encouraging them everywhere to serve Christ and the Church.”

I wonder how much we have been listening to the Holy Spirit? Are lay people responding to this call and is the church welcoming them to new roles? One theme that emerged in the Synodal discernment groups was the difficulty of the laity moving out of a rather passive role, due to the continuation of the hierarchical nature of the Church. Again, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is helpful – “The laity should develop the habit of working in the parish in close cooperation with their priests, of

bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems, world problems, and questions regarding humanity’s salvation, to examine them together and solve them by general discussion.”

It can be easier to continue in the familiar pattern that we have known for years. Hierarchies can, after all, be good – we need to have a structure where we understand each other’s roles and who will make decisions and implement changes. What may have to change, however, is the form that this hierarchy takes. Will it be an example of a listening church, that the synodal way promotes? Will people, especially those on the margins feel they have a voice?

This brings to mind the famous quote of St John Henry Newman: “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” Despite hearing this, we often have difficulty with change and this has been well demonstrated in the reaction of some to the Synodal way. All the more reason to be grateful for this conference, where we are specifically looking at the way forward, which inevitably involves change.

In order to make change a good thing, we all need formation. We need to understand our roles in the church; to have a substantial background in theology; spirituality and the pastoral role of the church. While we may take different roles, we have to work in a collaborative way; we need to understand each other; to recognise the strengths that we all bring to the church.

My interest, obviously, is in the formation of the laity – not just as a way to compensate for the decreasing numbers of clergy, but as a way for laity to become more educated; to harness their skills; to encourage participation in their parishes or communities and, thus, to contribute to a more collaborative model of pastoral care – always open to change and development.





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This idea is not new – Richard Gaillardetz, in his book “*An Unfinished Council*” published in 2015, reviews the role of Vatican II. He refers to the Council as a response to a hierocratic church; one which looked at a new ecclesial vision for the church – a church where we are all learning. He reminds us of the liturgical changes that were introduced, which emphasise the genuine ministries of servers, readers, choir members etc, most of whom would be laity. He has some tough comments to make about the fact (and I quote) that ‘we are far from realizing the respectful mutuality and noncompetitive character of ministerial relationships

enacted in each liturgical celebration.’

He quotes Austen Ivereigh as saying, in 2014, that “The Council will be Bergolio’s (Pope Francis’) greatest teacher, and the single greatest source, later, of his pontificate”. Now we are in 2023 and the Synod on Synodality is upon us, instigated by Pope Francis and obviously influenced by Vatican II.

Vatican II is considered a pastoral council. Now we are in a phase of implementing pastoral programmes within the Church. The success or failure of that approach will depend, in large part, on the formation of all those who take leadership roles within the Church – not only theoretical formation, but the acknowledgement of the importance of each other, and respecting each other’s contributions.

A well-known Māori proverb speaks of the importance of collaboration within communities – *Nā to rourou, nā taku rourou, ke ora ai te iwi* – “With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.”

We are here to share our food baskets and work towards our people thriving.

Note: You can find the Powerpoint presentations and resources from the CMPSI website <https://cmspi2023.mystrikingly.com/>

