



OLIVE LEAF NETWORK LTD (NZ)

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FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM:
OLIVE LEAF NETWORK

To: The Rapid Relief Team (NZ) and
The Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC Ltd)

11th May 2023

Re: Invitation to Collaborate on Charitable Work – An Open Letter

Dear RRT and PBCC leadership and members,

I would like to introduce myself and the Olive Leaf Network.

My name is Lindy Jacomb, and I am a former member of your fellowship. The Auckland assembly excommunicated me sometime after 2008, following a profoundly difficult time of disaffiliation from the Brethren. I was grateful to receive care and support from strangers during the trauma of this period, and while it is difficult to continue to be shunned by family members in the church, I now have a life I love. I enjoy living in Wellington (NZ) with my husband Tim, a pastor at Karori Baptist Church, and our children.

I am also the Team Facilitator at a recently-launched charity, the Olive Leaf Network. The Olive Leaf Network provides support for people disaffiliating from what we term high-demand religious groups, including those who leave your community; the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (formerly Exclusive Brethren). We respect the right of Brethren to live by their religious beliefs, but also believe that if a person chooses a different faith path, then they have a right to be supported in that choice. The process of leaving the PBCC is a difficult and isolating journey for many. Through our website and support networks, we aim to connect leavers with wider avenues of support as they build a new life.

We have seen the PBCC's charitable arm, the Rapid Relief Team, and its named values of community, compassion and support. These are values that the Olive Leaf Network also endorses, and we also value your focus on charitable action towards emergency and disaster relief, homelessness, youth, and health and disability. We believe there is overlap between your areas of focus and common challenges experienced by those who leave high-demand religious groups, including the PBCC. For example, a significant number of former Brethren speak of having experienced the need for emergency-type support or accommodation, as well as negative impacts to their health, as a result of leaving the church; and a number were youths when they experienced these things.

With this in mind we would love to extend an invitation to the Rapid Relief Team and the PBCC to work collaboratively with the Olive Leaf Network, to create safer pathways and support for those who leave your church. We believe this would create an opportunity for you to show demonstrable community, compassion and support to persons in need across New Zealand, in areas that fit with your focus.

It was encouraging to read PBCC spokesperson Doug Watt's recent media comments that if someone leaves the PBCC you wish the person well. Our hope is that this statement means you are interested in demonstrating measurable support towards those who leave your community and who experience vulnerability or need in doing so. We would value partnering with you to provide such support. Please let us know if you would be available for a conversation to discuss potential collaboration possibilities.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Lindy Jacomb
Team Facilitator
Olive Leaf Network