

Migrant people breathing new life into rural Churches



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In 2012 Immigration and Associate Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy said “Migrant workers make up a small but significant part of the dairy industry workforce, filling the gaps where there are not enough New Zealanders available.”

“There are now around 1500 migrant dairy workers in the country, making up 6% of the workforce. The majority come from the Philippines and demand has increased in recent years as it has proved difficult to attract and retain local workers in some parts of rural New Zealand.”

Ashburton, for example, has experienced a significant increase in the number of Tagalog, Tongan and Samoan speakers in the past seven years.

In 2005, when 34-year-old Patricio Dandin arrived in Ashburton to work on a dairy farm, he says he met only about half a dozen other Filipinos.

But between 2006 and 2013, the number of people in the Ashburton district who spoke Tagalog (spoken in the Philippines) went from 33 to 390. The number of people who spoke Tongan and Samoan went from 69 to 369.

Father Geoff Gray, Pastor of the Mid Canterbury Pastoral Area says the region’s Catholic community has “picked up its numbers” because of new baptisms and an influx of migrants with strong Catholic roots.

“They bring their own faith, religious values, culture and practices and they contribute a lot to the community and to the standard of living,” he says.

“Most of them are very good people. They are not out boozing and fighting like many Kiwis are. They are an asset to the community as well as the church.”

Holy Name Catholic Church, in Ashburton, has a Samoan choir and a Filipino choir – both formed last year – and a Filipino priest. Father Joselito Quinones says he has plans to celebrate a monthly mass in Tagalog.

Source

- [Stuff.co.nz \(http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/mid-canterbury-selwyn/9698694/Immigrants-pumping-new-life-into-town\)](http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/mid-canterbury-selwyn/9698694/Immigrants-pumping-new-life-into-town)
- [Embassy of the Philippines \(http://philembassy.org.nz/links/list-of-poea-licensed-recruitment-agencies/44-helpful-tips-for-filipinos-settling-down-in-nz/helpful-tips-for-filipinos-settling-down-in-new-zealand.html\)](http://philembassy.org.nz/links/list-of-poea-licensed-recruitment-agencies/44-helpful-tips-for-filipinos-settling-down-in-nz/helpful-tips-for-filipinos-settling-down-in-new-zealand.html)
- **Image:** [www.migrante-aotearoa.org.nz \(http://www.migrante-aotearoa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Crisis-Management-Team1.jpg\)](http://www.migrante-aotearoa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Crisis-Management-Team1.jpg)

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