



World Day of Prayer 2024

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation led by women which enables us to hear the thoughts, hopes, concerns and prayers of women from all parts of the world. Each year the service for World Day of Prayer (WDP) is prepared by women from a different country.

In 2017 the Christian women of Palestine were chosen to prepare the service for World Day of

Prayer 2024. At the time, the international committee could not have foreseen how that decision, and the theme “I beg you, bear with one another in love” Ephesians 4: 1-3 would resonate with the situation currently unfolding in Palestine. On Friday 1 March 2024 people in 146 countries will celebrate the service prepared by a group of ecumenical Christian Palestinian women.

On Saturday 2 December 2023 at 4.00pm New York time (5am Sunday NZ time) a WDP Global Conversation included representatives from the Palestine National WDP Committee involved in preparing the 2024 service. Their work - in the planning phase for several years - has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. It has taken on a new significance, given unfolding events in Gaza and the West Bank where more than 25,000 people, many women and children, have been killed in indiscriminate attacks since 7 October 2023.

Three representatives from the NZ WDP planning committee, including Methodist Publishing Board Chair, Pauline McKay, participated in the online forum where Palestinian committee members shared personal stories of the loss and devastation they have suffered over recent months.

Pauline found the Global Conversation content confronting and disturbing. “It was harrowing what they had to tell us about what is happening to family and friends. As communication from within Gaza and the West Bank is virtually impossible, the women who participated in the conversation lived in Bethlehem and Germany. The presentation included a written statement from Nora Carmi, who I know as a member of the YWCA of Palestine and WDP Palestine. She lives in Gaza.”

The Global Conversation – WDP service planners talk

WDP executive committee member, Maral Haidostian, opened the hour-long global conversation by providing context to the development of the service. Planning was initially impacted by the global coronavirus pandemic and then war denied members of the committee the ability to meet in person. She introduced other members of the executive committee and welcomed the global audience - tuning in live from all over the world – saying, “May God’s peace and reconciliation prevail.”

Rev Sally Azar, Chair of the WDP Committee, became the first ordained female Palestinian pastor in the Holy Land in 2023. Since 2017 she has worked alongside 17 other Palestinian Christian women to write the liturgy for WDP 2024. The group divided themselves into committees tasked with various aspects of the service e.g. music, worship liturgy and Bible study. Rev Azar said, “The service reflects the authenticity of the voices of all the women involved in preparing resources.”



A Daily Struggle Being a Christian in the Holy Land

Each of the WDP committee representatives reiterated their pride in being a Christian Palestinian existing in the Holy Land. They also emphasised the difficulties associated with living as a minority group, experiencing aggression and hostility daily. Sharing their struggles and comforting each other in love, as defined by the 2024 WDP theme, enabled them to speak out, comfort each other and move forward in their daily lives and in their WDP preparations. The universal language of love was the main line of communication used throughout the planning and preparation.

Shireen Awwad, a member of the WDP Palestine committee residing on the outskirts of Bethlehem, was emotional and brutally honest as she spoke about the situation in Gaza from a deeply personal perspective. Two of her aunts were sheltering in a church that was attacked; one was killed and the other severely injured. The injured woman subsequently underwent surgery without anaesthetic and her recovery has been compromised by a lack of rehabilitation. Shireen's uncle died because he was not able to get a routine operation.

Parents write their children's names on their hands or legs as a way of identifying them as many people killed in the incessant bombing are being buried without being identified. Shireen talked about the carnage that ensued when an ancient historic Greek Orthodox Church, in which many were taking sanctuary, was bombed.

As the indigenous Christian population of Palestine is being forced to leave Gaza, her fear is that their churches will become museum pieces – no longer places of worship for the small, courageous and brave Christian community. Her moving commentary was supported by graphic images showing scenes of devastation, mass graves and raw human grief.

"It is a sad situation and there is no justification that Israel can continue doing what they are doing now. There is no safe place The only solution now is to pray."

Shireen's plea for world action to encourage Israel to stop the inhumane attacks that represent "a collective punishment on all civilians because of Hamas," must include peace and justice. "Peace without justice is not peace."

Need for Prayer

Pauline McKay supports that call for prayer. "At a time when the people of Palestine need our solidarity and prayers more than in any time of their turbulent history, I urge people to attend the World Day of Prayer on Friday 1 March. Paul reminds the Ephesians that God chose both Jews and Gentiles to be saved, bringing together people of vastly diverse backgrounds. These words are as relevant today as they were when Paul wrote them around 60-61 CE".

Pauline is aware that not all people side with the Palestinian situation and witnessed first-hand resistance to supporting the Palestinian cause in her role as Director of Christian World Service. "Our support for the Department for Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) was sometimes challenged. I remember a robust discussion in Southland where I was told emphatically that Jews are the chosen people of God. CWS should be pro-Israel rather than supporting Palestine. They were unaware of the Christian community in Palestine and that they stay there because otherwise there would be no Christian presence in the Holy Land. Tragically that may eventuate. CWS has financially supported DSPR since 1949 - its oldest partner. The offering from the 2024 World Day of Prayer service will be used to support their work," Pauline says.

Via the chat box, Pauline was able to tell the presenters about the weekly demonstrations in Christchurch in support of the Palestinian cause - as there have been around New Zealand and the world. "I got the feeling that they thought the world had forgotten about them, especially when the question was posed, 'How could the international community let this happen?'"

On Friday 1 March 2024 people will gather in 146 countries to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Palestine. It begins in Samoa and travels through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.



Living Authentic Lives

MCNZ Vice President TeRito Semu Peyroux

After a summer of welcoming, hosting, connecting and farewelling friends and whānau from overseas, around the country, and locally, I can't say that my 'summer holidays' were particularly restful, but they were certainly rejuvenating, nonetheless. Although sometimes tiring, something is refreshing and reinvigorating about being able to share moments, make memories, laugh, cry, make and break bread, learn from and even teach others, especially whānau, as well as friends and colleagues who become whānau, even more so during the time of the year when we're more relaxed, in "holiday mode".

Last year, Rev Keita Hotere and I were the delegates representing our hāhi at the Pacific Council of Churches 12th General Assembly in Noumea, Kanaky (New Caledonia). Maungarongo Tito from our hāhi also attended the Assembly as a delegate representing Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga I Nga Hāhi O Aotearoa (The Māori Council of Churches).

While attending the Church Leader's Pre-Assembly in Drehu before the main programme began in Noumea, I came to learn more about my tūpuna tāne from Aitutaki. His name was Paō, but in Kanaky he was known as Fao. Fao was the missionary who in 1841, with the help of Tongan translators (who were said to have already been living on the island since the 1770s), brought Christianity to be accepted by the Paramount Chiefs of Drehu. This was the introduction and acceptance of Christianity on the island and then wider Kanaky.

As a child, and even as recently as the last Te Maeva Nui Aotearoa Festival back in September (which is the equivalent to Te Matatini for Cook Islanders living in New Zealand) I had heard songs and chants about Fao and other men and women, who like him, had dedicated their lives to sharing the Hope of the Gospel with others living in more remote parts of the Pacific, and the world. But to be in Drehu, to be in the bay and on the very beach that Fao came to land on; to make and leave an 'ei (flower garland) and sing in his mother tongue at his tomb; and to meet with the Paramount Chiefs and villagers of today, who are descendants of the Paramount Chiefs and people who welcomed both Fao and Christianity, over 180 years ago; then to discover that the significance of that time, has continued to give moral and spiritual sustenance today, is truly beyond anything I, my parents and grandparents could ever have dreamed of!

The main programme for the General Assembly was very rich and full of a plethora of services, devotions, panels, reports, presentations, plenaries and decisions that were presented to and engaging the diverse spectrums of member churches, associates and participants connected to the Pacific Council of Churches.

The theme of this Assembly was Do Kamo: The Authentic Human in Permanent Becoming. The gift of this theme from the Kanaky people, was a call to us in our rich Pasifika diversities, to seek the transformation of ourselves and our world, not to perfection, but a journey to authentically be all that God calls us to be.

Following a very successful Hui-Ā-Motu 2024, which was called and recently hosted by Kīngi Tūheitia at Tūrangawaewae Marae in Ngāruawāhia, I was very pleasantly reminded of the spirit of Do Kamo, when Te Kīngi reminded the people gathered that "The best protest we can do right now is be Māori, be who we are, live our values, speak our reo, care for our mokopuna, our awa, our maunga. Just be Māori".

Essentially, even for Tauīwi, all we are ever called to be is our authentic selves, whilst also being respectful, protective and empowering of those around us, particularly those who are most vulnerable in our local, regional and even global communities, so that they can live to be their authentic selves also. Mai te Awa ki te Moana. Mauri Ora!



Religious Leaders Gather

On 5 December 2023, the Religious Leaders Forum, hosted each year by the Religious Diversity Centre, met in St John's Theological College on its historic site in Meadowbank, Auckland. **Rev Uesifili Unasa and TeRito Peyroux-Semu** represented MCNZ at the event.

Rev Te Hira Paenga, Tikanga Maori dean of the College welcomed the gathering with a mihi whakatau. Jocelyn Armstrong, Co-chair of the Religious Diversity Centre, welcomed the Forum as a key event in the RDC calendar. In small groups the leaders shared the critical issues they were facing. They highlighted:

- concern about the government's policies related to te Tiriti o Waitangi and te Reo Maori,
- the effects of overseas conflict and tensions on the related communities in Aotearoa NZ,
- the current need for providing security for places of worship,
- the long-lasting impacts of the Covid pandemic,
- the challenges of diversity that can lead to anxiety and a crisis of identity,
- concern for young people, many agnostic, and losing trust in the world around them.

Addressing the recent Statement issued by the Human Rights Commission and the RDC 'Roles and Responsibilities of Religious Leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand', the leaders discussed how they might together contribute to national conversations. They agreed to explore ways in which they might, as a diverse group but with one voice, offer the spirituality and values shared by the diverse religions. This would add a point of difference to the public conversation.

Jocelyn Armstrong reported on the progress made during the past year on two of the Religious Leaders' prime concerns:

- Learning about religions in our primary and intermediate schools: Discussions with the Ministry of Education have reached the point of offering teachers' workshops now that 'religious diversity' is included in the Social Studies curriculum and teaching about religions can take place in Social Studies classes.
- Care of the environment and the sustainability of the planet: The RDC Climate Action Group had sought the endorsement of religious leaders and communities for the Call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty in preparation for the UNCOP 28 Climate Change conference. The RDC's successful series of four webinars, 'E tu te mana o Te Ao, Building a Climate of Hope' are recorded and available on the RDC Website www.rdc.org.nz for use as discussion starters.

In the final session of the day, the 'Religious Communities Disaster Resilience Guide' was introduced by Rohan Jaduram of Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) and RDC Trustee, Professor Paul Morris. Produced by the AEM with the RDC, the RDC is now prepared to work with councils and religious communities to develop a Guide for other centres in the country.

The Leaders agreed to meet again early in the New Year to take this meeting's discussions further. The day closed with prayer led by the Religious Leaders Forum secretary, the Rev Prince Devanandan.



Julie (left) and her friend Nicky deliver their hamper stash to the distribution centre

Support a Family Festive Hampers Bring Hope and Joy

A community initiative started by the Christchurch Methodist Mission (CMM) to bring a little Christmas joy to disadvantaged Christchurch families 16 years ago has grown into an amazingly successful appeal that saw more than 650 families benefit from the largesse of sponsors, organisations and generous individuals in 2023.

CMM's Support a Family Christmas appeal matches donors to families in need to provide them with a personalised Christmas hamper that includes gifts for the children and food items to fill their pantry and provide a Christmas meal. In addition to an increasing number of corporate sponsors, the initiative is attracting interest from many individuals and groups concerned by the growing number of households impacted by a cost-of-living crisis that cannot stretch to accommodate a Christmas extravaganza.

Support a Family coordinator Glenda Marshall has been involved for the past 12 years. She says the initiative's purpose is to bring joy to children and relief to their parents who are struggling to make ends meet. "We know that the past few years particularly have been tough on disadvantaged families and that too many children would wake up without presents under the tree or food on the table if it were not for the incredible generosity of Support a Family donors,".

One of those donors is Julie Blyth who along with three friends has participated for the past two years. What started as a suggestion from a friend as a charitable gesture in 2022, has turned out to be a fun and rewarding experience for the group.

Julie says, "This is our second Christmas being involved in the Support a Family hampers appeal and we enjoyed getting everything together even more this time around. We divided the hampers up: two organise the gifts and other treats like crackers and chocolates, one does all the non-perishable food items that can be purchased a couple of weeks out and I do the fresh shop on the delivery morning."

Beyond the feel-good factor of helping a family experience a joyous Christmas, Julie says the group enjoy having a valid excuse to catch up in the often-frantic lead-up to the festive season. "We get together the weekend before to wrap the presents and check we have covered everything off, which is a nice reason to catch up amongst the hustle and bustle of the pre-Christmas period," Julie says.

Staff at the Connexional Office also participated in the 2023 appeal for the first time, adopting a family including a single parent and five children aged five to 16 years old. A brief profile of each person, including their gender, age and interests helped staff select food and gifts likely to appeal. By the time the collection 'box' was ready for dispatch, the volume of parcels and foodstuffs was spilling out over several boxes, filling the entire boot of the vehicle used to transport the loot to the distribution depot.

Glenda says, "Over the years, I've seen the need for support over the festive season grow in the community. And every year I've seen individuals, families, parishes and businesses opening their hearts to our appeal, and responding with incredible kindness and generosity to bring Christmas cheer to those who need it most."



Lay Preachers Re-Think Worship

Richard Small, Incoming Correspondence Secretary for NZLPA

In early December, 27 lay preachers representing 12 Auckland parishes gathered at St John's College in Auckland where Rev Andrew Gamman led a workshop on Re-Thinking Worship. Andrew, a presbyter at

Waitoki Community Church, Whangaparaoa Methodist Parish, is well known for his innovative approach to worship and worship resources.

The diverse audience included lay preachers and others from Te Taha Māori and co-operating ventures in Te Tai Taukarau/Northland, Auckland Manukau and Waikato, trainee lay preachers from Waitakere, a retired presbyter, the ecumenical deaf fellowship - and a loyal hearing dog – as well as Pākehā, Samoan, Tongan, and Fijian representatives. Clearly there is great interest in making worship more relevant and connected with today's world!

The interactive seminar provided many valuable insights. We looked at why people disconnect from worship and how attention spans and communication have changed. What worked 40 years ago is no longer relevant for many. We considered several topical issues. Do people come to church to be "told stuff" or to grow in their journey of faith? Do we assume that our audience may include those who are unfamiliar with church jargon? Are we promoting a living faith, or a Sunday morning hobby meeting?

We also looked at basic delivery issues. We need to show conviction in what we say, and how we say it:

- Speaking clearly at a normal pace and with conviction.
- Projecting confidence and having a clear message.
- Minimising Christian jargon and abstract terms
- Engaging people rather than being judgemental. Using the active voice.
- Appropriate use of power points (pictures not words).

We were challenged to work through a passage of Scripture and to reduce the message to a single simple sentence with a few basic preaching points. Participants worked through a simple worksheet to prepare a worship service. Feedback indicated this was an extremely valuable learning experience for all.

We extend a special thanks to Andrew whose progressive resources, principles and practices have seen Waitoki, become a vibrant hands-on church where attendees include the demographics missing from so many other places of worship.

Long time Correspondence Secretary for the NZ Lay Preachers' Association Linda Hall organised the 2 December event. She is now stepping back, and I look forward to taking on the role.



Touchstone Contact Details

I welcome feedback on content included in Touchstone

Ngā mihi nui

Ady Shannon, Editor Touchstone

Email adys@methodist.org.nz

Phone: 021 209 9702



Methodist Social Housing Fund Making a Difference

Christchurch Methodist Mission

The housing crisis in Aotearoa/New Zealand is dire for many families. In 2020, the Methodist Conference acknowledged 'the skills and resources Te Hāhi Weteriana has to be a part of the solution.'

In 2021, Conference formally committed Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa to explore how it could best use its financial, property and human resources to address the housing crisis and wellbeing of communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Methodist Social Housing Fund (MSHF) was established out of this concern. This fund includes two percent of the sales of Grafton Downs Ltd and is available to Methodist Community Housing Providers for social housing.

The Christchurch Methodist Mission (CMM) currently has two projects underway that have received grants from the funds;

1. Rogers St, Blenheim

Blenheim has a significant housing shortage. The median weekly rent in the Marlborough District has doubled over the last ten years, from \$275 in 2013 to \$550 at the end of 2023. Incomes have not kept pace.

Over the past six years, CMM has been providing support to individuals and families who are homeless in Blenheim. CMM is committed to helping people move into long term rentals and this means increasing the social housing supply in Blenheim by building new housing. Currently CMM is building six 2-bedroom houses in Rogers St. for families on the Housing Register. This project has been greatly assisted by a grant of \$750,000 from the Methodist Social Housing Fund. Families will be moving in in the second half of 2024.

2. Somerfield St, Ōtautahi/Christchurch

Christchurch South Parish (St Marks) has also responded to the Conference call to use the resources of Te Hāhi Weteriana to address the housing crisis. The parish owns a property next to its church and has leased this land to CMM for social housing development. An old house on the site has been demolished to make way for five new houses. Once again, the MSHF provided a significant grant of \$700,000 for this development.

Families in CMM's transitional housing will be prioritised for these new builds and by mid-2024, five of these families have a permanent home in Somerfield St.

Tuam St, Ōtautahi/Christchurch

Also in the pipeline are 20 new homes for kaewa (clients) of Housing First Ōtautahi who are experiencing long term homelessness. These homes, together with a communal space, will be built in the central city on a site recently purchased by CMM from the Community of the Sacred Name. This community of Anglican sisters came to the city in 1895 to undertake parish work, teach and care for the poor and sick. Their century-old convent did not survive the Canterbury earthquakes and last year they decided to sell the property.

In September last year, **CMM staff gathered with the Sisters** in a liturgy to give thanks for the work of the Community of the Sacred Name and to recall its history. CMM Executive Director, Jill Hawkey, honoured the tradition of compassionate care established by the Sisters over many years.

Recognising how important it will be to continue to address the housing crisis in the coming years, the Methodist Alliance National Forum in Auckland (8–9 March 2024) will focus on housing.



Marama Hotere

Hui-ā-Motu

Reflection: Marama Hotere

On Saturday 20 January Kiingi Tuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero VII called a Hui-ā-Motu for Te Iwi Māori. The key kaupapa being 'Kotahitanga' - a hui for National Unity. "Taakiri tuu te kotahitanga, Taakiri tuu te Mana Motuhake." The hui brought together Māori and Tauīwi from various backgrounds, communities, and organisations to wānanga, to look at what shared Māori aspirations we have around aspects of our identity, our language, youth engagements, economic health, and other elements that contribute to the well-being of Māori. At the centre of all discussions was the place of Te Tiriti in

our national identity and relationships with the Crown.

An estimated 10,000 participants converged on Turangawaewae marae in Ngaruawāhia to be welcomed by hosts Waikato Tainui.

The morning's Kawhau (sermon) delivered by Anglican Archbishop Don Tamihere enlivened the space and set the scene for Māori to enter forum discussions with aroha for one another and aroha for kaupapa Māori. There were five forums with 35 Haika (panellists/facilitators); Taakiritia Te Raa ki Tua: The Rangatahi, Taakiritia te Reo, Taakiritia te Tikanga: Māori language & Protocols, Taakiritia te Tuakiri: National Identity, Taakiritia te Oranga: People and Economies. These forums generated a lot of discussion from all age groups, and diverse perspectives. Some were riveting, and all were unapologetically Māori.

Throughout the day affirmative, strength-based messages of building a positive future ahead for all who live in Aotearoa resonated across the marae grounds. I was warmed by the shared sense of purpose and the potential for collective action to drive meaningful outcomes. Resolutions from organisers of the event are being drafted for further consultation to take place in other rohe.

Following the Hui-ā-Motu my colleagues of NZEI spent Sunday in wānanga mode critiquing for ourselves the fruits of Saturday's national gathering. We left feeling prepared, inspired and hopeful about the possibilities of a justice filled Aotearoa for all.

As Māoridom mobilised on masse for this powerful historic Hui-ā-Motu we can be proud of our achievements and aspirations for the future. We can also celebrate with pride the true essence of Kotahitanga that salutes being Māori, all day, everyday, Mauri Ora!

Prayer for Unity – Mō te Hui-ā-Motu

E te Atua Atawhai

Whakakotahi i a maatou

Tuakana Teina i roto i te whakaaro kotahi

Whakamahia oo maatou pukenga waananga

Hangaia he ao hou moo te katoa e noho nei ki Aotearoa

Amine.



Butterfly Effect

Rev Andrew Doubleday, UCANZ Ministry Facilitator

The year stretches out ahead of us. As did last year, it holds uncertainties – will this year be the one that sees China move against Taiwan? Will the US again re-elect a twice impeached, four times indicted ex-president - who incited an insurrection, and currently faces 91 criminal charges – as its next President? Will Russia or Ukraine triumph? How will the Israel/Gaza conflict be resolved? Will the nations wake up, this year, to the extent of the

environmental crisis facing us? Will our new tripartite NZ government go the distance, or dissolve at the 18-month mark?

Each and every one of these issues will ultimately affect life here in Aotearoa. Would we have accurately predicted the state of the world when we stood at this point at the beginning of 2023?

Yet, as Steven Covey points out in his 'Seven Habits' literature, we need to recognise the difference between the size of our circles of concern and influence. While we may be deeply concerned about all these things, how much energy can we afford to give them recognising our relative impotence?

Each of us has a measure of agency. For making a positive difference. It may not feel like much, yet we do not know how a simple loving conversation will affect the rest of the planet. I remember hearing the explanation of the 'Butterfly Effect' given in the movie 'Jurassic Park'. It was something along the lines of 'that the thunderstorms we are currently experiencing were caused by the way a butterfly fluttered its wings three weeks ago in the Amazon jungle'. This is to suggest both the difficulty in accurately giving detailed long range weather forecasts and the effect of small factors to have a significant influence; a wee bit like the biblical model of a small rudder at the back determining the direction of a supertanker. The problem is that none of us know the effect of any action, of any word, of any withholding.

My father-in-law died over the Christmas break. At 97 he'd lived a full life. I opened the funeral service by referencing a lunch wrapper that had an advertisement appealing to potential immigrants to New Zealand. For two Dutch soldiers guarding a bridge in 1949 in Indonesia, this lunch wrapper changed not only the course of their lives but has rippled on and changed the lives of all who have been part of their lives. We are all interconnected.

Physicists tell us that the movement of a single electron on one side of the universe affects the movement of another on the other side.

While it may seem ridiculous to suggest it, the decisions and choices we make ultimately have the potential to make a real difference in the lives of many. We just can't know which ones the significant decisions and choices are. Rather than paralysing us, perhaps this realisation can release us into the awareness that our lives matter, even though they may appear mundane and ordinary.



REFLECTION



Age No Barrier To Embracing Life

Rev Dr Susan Thompson

Nan and I didn't start tramping until we were in our mid-forties. I always thought tramping was something that other people did: people with different, more adventurous lives than mine.

But one year some friends invited us on one of New Zealand's Great Walks and we were hooked. We've done many tramps around Aotearoa since then, making lifelong friends and seeing wonderful remote landscapes we would never otherwise have seen. We

especially love being off-grid for a few days and away from the continual demands of our phones. It's rest for the soul.

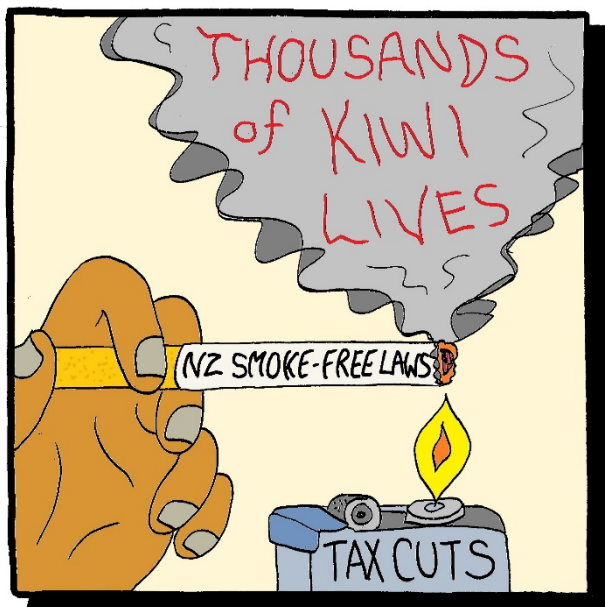
Now we're in our late fifties and we are certainly not the fastest trampers on the track. This year we walked the Tongariro Northern Circuit and were frequently passed by younger, fitter walkers. As we've become older we've stopped worrying about how fast we're walking or how early we get to the hut. The most important thing is that we enjoy ourselves and that we all get there together leaving no-one behind.

We take our time, stopping often to enjoy the view, to talk to people we meet on the track and to give our tired lungs and wobbly knees the chance to rest. We're conscious of and allow for each other's varying needs and abilities. And we remind ourselves that, if it's taking us an extra two hours to get to the hut, that's an extra two hours we'll have to experience the beauty of the bush, the sky and the mountains.

Aware that we're probably as old as the parents of many of our fellow walkers, we also hope that they'll be inspired by our example and realise that it's still possible to do all sorts of things as they get older. Every tramp we do is a physical and mental challenge but we don't have to give up the things we love just because we're aging. As long as we know our limits we can stay active for we are all - young and old - so much stronger than we know.



CARTOON



Up in smoke ...

Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

Our regular cartoon that seeks to find the funny side of faith.



Carol Barron, A Strong Force for Social Justice

In December, Carol Barron, retired from her role as National Coordinator of the Methodist Alliance. She has brought enormous skill, wisdom, humour, passion, compassion, vision and innovation to the position she started six years ago. The following article captures the spirit and career of an outstanding women, deeply committed to social justice and ensuring policies and practices are designed to help those in need.

This is a reduced version of the original article written by Rachel Mackay, for the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services Kete Kupu Kirihimete 2023 edition. The fond farewell recognises Carol's long serving role as a member of the governing Council of

NZCCSS and their Older Persons and Equity & Inclusion Policy Group

Carol began her working life as a radiation therapist. Her love of maths and physics and her natural inclination to care for people made her perfect for the role and the engagement with the patients was motivating and rewarding. Working in oncology departments here and overseas, hammered home that the human experience is a universal one – the cancer patients she cared for in Aotearoa were going through the same deeply human thing as those overseas.

After a successful stint in this field, it was time for something new, and so Carol retrained as a lawyer at Canterbury University. She timed the birth of her children for semester breaks and was supported by her tutors to bring her children to tutorials with her. Carol's law career spanned personal, properties, commercial and elder care, with her first clerking job being at the New Zealand College of Midwives.

A variety of steps brought Carol to her role as National Coordinator of the Methodist Alliance in 2017. The Alliance itself was established at Conference the year prior, and so Carol is the first person to have held the role and sculpted what kind of position it is.

Over the last six years, the Methodist Alliance has injected an enormous amount of good into communities across the country. Carol is particularly proud of the national forum she initiated just six months into her role. Bringing together the organisations under the Methodist Alliance banner, there have been three iterations to date.

She uses the network to produce "videos from the front line" to show at the National Conference of the Methodist Church to keep those on the theological side of things up to date with the work being done on the social service side. And she has written The History of Methodist Social Services of Aotearoa – an excellently referenced overview of the impact that the services that would become the Methodist Alliance have had since the earliest missionaries arrived in Aotearoa in 1822.

Throughout her work history, Carol has been deeply involved with the Methodist church, as a parishioner, a Parish Steward, on various Committees, and as a Sunday School teacher. Carol's engagement with her church and the core values of the Methodist Church is where she thinks her own strong sense of social justice came from.

"We've had a long a strong history of social justice in the Methodist Church. It's part of how I was brought up." She notes with pride that the Methodists have been actively engaged with co-governance since the 1980s, when the whole church committed to the Treaty of Waitangi as a covenant relationship at the 1983 Conference. She was thoroughly engaged in protests on key



OUR PEOPLE

issues when she was younger , including antinuclear marches and the anti-racism protests around the Springboks tour.

This lens has allowed her to provide clear leadership in the Alliance on issues such as climate justice, housing issues for Māori and Pacific Peoples, and communication on political party policy. It also afforded the NZCCSS secretariat the combination of her excellent wit and humour, and her critical eye over much of the work produced while she was part of the policy groups and Council.

Now a very active early retirement is planned. She is taking on a volunteer role within the Transitional Team for Mission Resourcing, a small team working to ensure that the systems of the Methodist Church function for the future, as well as returning to Parish Stewardship at her local church.

She is also bringing her father, in his 90s, to come and live with her and her husband. She had been encouraging him to move in sooner, but he wouldn't do it until she retired, so she has. "This time is precious," she said. "I want to help him have the best quality of life for the rest of his time with us" Her father is also encouraging her to write the family history of her mother's side of the family, so she is looking forward to hearing all his stories about them and getting them down on the page.

That might leave a spare afternoon here and there for any of Carol's other hobbies. "If there's a craft, I've tried it," she said, outlining her fondness for watercolours and acrylics, pyrography, and needle and yarn crafts.



NZMWF



NZMWF New Committee Plan for Year Ahead.

As we celebrate the New Year, NZMWF President Lesieli Pope extends greetings to the wider Connexion and responds to questions about plans for the coming year. Fakafeta'i 'etau ma'u 'a e ta'ufo'ou ko 'eni. Happy New Year to all NZMWF District members and people of all parishes. We are so blessed with God's love and guidance. Thanks be to God. I pray for a productive and successful year ahead of us with the hope that God grants our hearts' deepest desires.

What events do you have planned for the year ahead?

This year will be a busy year for us as we prepare for the South Pacific Area seminar that will be held from 4 to 8 September, in Samoa. Also, as confirmed at the last NZMWF convention, New Zealand will host the World Federation Seminar in 2026. We kindly request your support in remembering these two significant events and including them in your prayers.

Will you be visiting people and places beyond Tāmaki Makaurau?

District visitation plans are currently being finalised and will be confirmed later. However, some districts have scheduled their dates as follows: Tonga Districts for the second weekend of February, Wellington Districts for the 27 April, Wasewase for King's Birthday weekend 1 to 3 June in Christchurch, and Waikato sometime in July.



Do you have plans for members of your executive team to engage in leadership and training programmes?

Some executive members plan to actively participate and engage in leadership and training programmes. The team will delve deeper into the opportunities available during our inaugural meeting at the end of the month.

How will you engage with other fellowships groups in the South Pacific?

This year, our World Federation representative, Simulata Pope, will establish and maintain close communication with the executive members of each unit in the South Pacific region. This will involve engaging in talanoa sessions and exchanging correspondence to ensure a continuous and active connection. Presently, there is ongoing email correspondence between us and the president of the South Pacific Association (SPA) along with her team.

Is there any other news you wish to share?

I was given the opportunity to visit several local parishes within the Tonga Districts early in the New Year. It is important to note that this visitation is distinct from the regular Districts visitation. Every year, during the first week of January, Vahefonua Tonga holds morning and evening prayer sessions.

In closing, I would like to reiterate our theme of "GROW IN CHRIST AND BE A LIFE GIVER." This theme serves as a reminder for us to embark on a collective journey, guided by the grace of God, and to bring life to others through our actions. Let us strive to let God's light shine through everything we do.



Restoring Communities after Tonga Eruption

Gillian Southey, Christian World Service

Late last year, Tonga Community Development Trust delivered the first 50 chicken houses to families in nine villages. More are planned as part of a strategy that has proved effective after previous natural disasters. Kapiolani was delighted with her chicken house and the training she received. A staff member from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests showed the group how to care

for the chickens and increase productivity.

After Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai erupted in January 2022, Kapiolani could not earn the income she needed from weaving fans. As an active member of the women's network, Amatakiloa a Fafine, Kapiolani had already found great benefit from the Trust's gardening programme and group support.

Thanks to the group sessions and the plants she received Kapiolani could grow more of the food her family needed and have more time for her daughter with special needs. She planted banana and breadfruit trees, pele, and vegetables as well as some flowers.

In the aftermath of the eruption, the Trust has focused on helping communities recover from the massive disaster that affected much of the country. It distributed topsoil to 150 households in low lying areas with poor soil as well as delivering six different types of vegetable seedlings and eight different types of trees to 200 households. Food security, water safety and mental well-being are the Trust's current priorities. It is running workshops to help communities prepare for future disasters and adapt to climate change.



Searching for Sustainability in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, elephant and human deaths have been rising as the competition for natural resources intensifies. With drier conditions and increased water shortages associated with climate change, steps need to be taken now to ensure food for elephants and humans.

In last year’s Christmas Appeal, Christian World Service focused on the urgent need for food. While many of its partners are teaching agro-ecological skills to help families grow the food they cannot afford, only in Sri

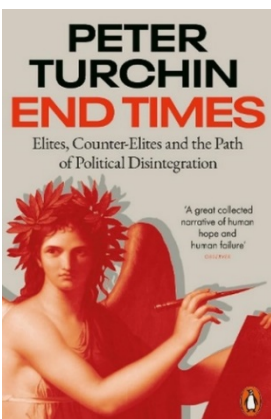
Lanka do they have to contend with wild elephants. Several people who clearly loved elephants told CWS they had not thought about what life might be like for the people who lived alongside these large animals.

According to the most recent report, 449 elephants were killed in 2023 up from 433 the year before. More than 169 people lost their lives last year an increase of 24 on the previous year – mostly from rural communities.

Electric fences that can kill the elephants have been erected throughout the dry zone, fragmenting forests and making it difficult for them to find the food and water they need. Invasive species are encroaching on the reserves which are also affected by 54 neighbouring rubbish dumps. Land has been cleared for crops like palm oil and tea or human settlement. The tourism industry is forcing elephants to live closer together and some, especially males, do not like the attention and escape.

Elephant drives and electric fences are the main strategies for dealing with the elephants but there is some evidence that forcing elephants out of an area increases aggression. Some people resort to harmful “jaw bombs” (explosive-laden bait) or guns which can kill or seriously injure the animals.

Thank you for your Christmas gifts. Further donations are welcome. Donate online or phone 0800 74 73 72.



End Times

Elites, Counter Elites and the Path of Political Disintegration

Author: Peter Turchin.

Publisher: Allen Lane 2023. 352 pages.

Reviewer: David Bush

In 2010 Peter Turchin wrote to Nature magazine in response to their request for ‘visions of 2020’. Rather than the upbeat expectations of progress Turchin claimed: “The next decade is likely to be a period of growing instability in the United States and western Europe.” Pointing to waves of disruption that tend to recur every 50 years he said, “All these cycles look set to peak in the years around 2020.”

Turchin describes himself as a complexity scientist who studies patterns in society with specific focus on what causes societies to succeed or fail. The advent of computing has enabled the collection and analysis of data as diverse as the diet of populations and the number of people who receive advanced education.

Instead of a series of random events, Turchin claims that over hundreds of years revolutions, war and State collapse are linked by common factors. When income inequality surges two



things happen. First, a large group of people find it increasingly hard to make ends meet – he calls this ‘immiseration’ as the ‘wealth pump’ moves funds from the majority of citizens to the top 1 percent. This leads to mass discontent.

Secondly, there is an overproduction of elites. That is educated and often wealthy individuals who aspire to important roles or positions. He describes this as musical chairs where the number of chairs remains constant, but the number of participants dramatically increases. An overproduction of elites he claims led to state breakdown in Imperial China, medieval France and the American Civil War as the disappointed become ‘counter elites’ bent on destroying the system which has denied them what they want.

In 2010 Turchin set out how the crisis he saw coming could be averted, drawing on historical precedent from the United Kingdom in the 19th century and the USA from the 1930s where Elites limited their incomes and the majority of the population was supported. In the USA taxes on the wealthy moved from 7 percent to nearly 90 percent fostering a period of unity and stability that ended in the late 1970s when taxes on wealth decreased dramatically. The result is a ‘wealth pump’ which moves wealth from the bottom and the middle to the top 1 percent. In 2023 Turchin claims it is too late to avoid the consequences of this inequality. His hope, is that his analysis of a long period of history will prompt the voluntary changes which can strengthen a society.

This is not a book about politics. Turchin is a data scientist. There is no question, however, that the matters he discusses lie at the heart of political decision making. This is a book you want to discuss with a friend to tease out the ideas.



The Ever-Widening Circles

Author: Marg Schrader

Publisher: Philip Garside Publishing, 2023. 191 pages. Print \$40; e-book \$20.

Reviewer: Garth Cant

This book deserves a diversity of readerships. It is personal; the story of the ever-unfolding life of one who has been a primary school teacher, and Methodist Deaconess in Australia; then wife, mother to eight children, minister, and Moderator of PCANZ. The author has packed love, excitement, compassion and adventure into her life. If you are Presbyterian, Methodist, or more widely ecumenical in New Zealand Marg's story will delight you. If

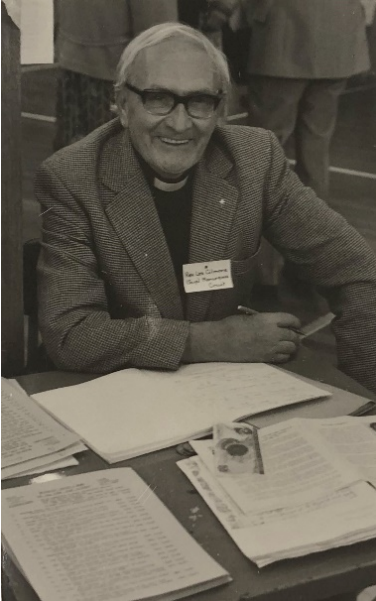
you are local church or have given up on your local or national church, this book will resonate in all sorts of ways. If you have lived for eight or more decades, or engage with parents or grandparents in that cohort, you will be in for shared adventures and new insights.

Parts move rapidly and are compulsive reading. For anyone who has been sexually or spiritually abused by a clergyman, church leader, or fellow Christian, chapters 11 and 13 explore the effects of sexual and spiritual abuse. If you are a minister, lay preacher or youth leader seeking to make church safe, inclusive, and wholesome, these chapters are essential reading.

The book covers a range of topics from the nurturing and mutuality of Marg working with Sister Judith Ann O'Sullivan and Sister Yvonne Munro to create The Still Point retreat centre; to the multiple challenges and opportunities when the author was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand in 1995 and 1996.

Chapter titles include Moderator's Memories, Dreams and Dream Therapy. One chapter is the keynote speech to the PCANZ Assembly, 2018. Highlights for this reviewer were L'Arche, and Old Age is Not For Wimps.

The theme “Ever-Widening Circles” takes us to where Marg is now. The book concludes with the author enjoying her life in Kapiti as it continues in new, quietly exciting, and convivial ways.



Gilmore-Smith Legacy Continues

Rev Ian Faulkner, President of the Wesley Historical Society (NZ), The Wesley Historical Society administers the Gilmore-Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund, established some time ago to honour two long-standing members of the society, **Rev L.R.M. Gilmore** and Frank W. Smith. Rev Gilmore was secretary of the society from 1948 to 1982, and Frank Smith was an active and enthusiastic member of the society, with a lifelong interest in Samuel Ironside. In their memory the fund seeks to encourage post-graduate research in the field of Methodist history in Aotearoa New Zealand and the South Pacific.

The fund may make a grant of \$1500 annually to a postgraduate student of an accredited tertiary institution in New Zealand. The criteria governing the award stipulate that awardees are required to agree to deposit their completed research project in the Methodist archives, and to the publication (in some form) of this completed project by the society.

The current awardee Josh Reid is a PhD candidate in history at Massey University. The awardee's submitted brief indicates that the focus of his proposed thesis is the development of the flax industry in the Manawatu between 1840 and 1940. While at first glance this focus would appear to have few links to New Zealand Methodism, the links are strongly there.

Included in the research will be an investigation into the influence of Methodism in the Christian Pacifist movement, which had a significant constituency amongst flax workers. Flax Union members comprised more military defaulters in the First World War than came from any other industry. Pacifism was an integral principle of the Flax Union, perhaps reflecting the influence of the Maori peace movement and the Christian pacifist tradition, and of several Methodist clergy and thinkers. These Methodists included Percy Paris, editor of The New Zealand Methodist Times and later President of the New Zealand Methodist Church; Ormond Burton, a notable pacifist, minister and educator; and Moses Ayrton, minister, activist, and trade unionist. This research may shed light on a hitherto overlooked element of Methodist influence on the formation of a powerful trade union and the wider labour movement.

The Wesley Historical Society looks forward to the completion of this research and reading the published outcome. It is an example of the interest that the society has in gathering the stories of our Methodist history and experience in Aotearoa New Zealand, and hopes that knowing this will encourage further scholarly investigation.

Applications are to be made in writing by email to the President, by mid-September each year, supported by a clear brief of the research to be undertaken, along with supporting statements that will confirm that the fund's criteria would be met. The society's executive will consider any applications at a meeting in October; and advise a decision promptly following the meeting.

Further information about the terms and conditions of the scholarship is available from the writer and President of the Wesley Historical Society (NZ), Rev Ian Faulkner.
ian.faulkner2017@gmail.com.



Take The Light And Pass It On

Rev Donald Phillipps

In this series I have already spoken of Sister Amy Lill (later Mrs Sutherland) who spent time as a travelling evangelist for Primitive Methodism in this country. She had hoped to serve in the China Inland Mission but this was not possible. She did, however, lead the way in terms of ministry and, as a supply Home Missionary for the Primitive Methodist Connexion in Inglewood in 1904/1905, she may be thought of as the first stationed woman minister in New Zealand Methodism.

Her older sister, **Rose Mary**, was born 150 years ago this month in Willowby, near Ashburton. **Known as Sister Maisie**, she was equally a trailblazer and after the relative peace and safety of South Canterbury farm life, she served for three years at Ubuia, at the eastern end of Papua – the very edge of the ‘civilized world’ for Europeans of that day. Her work was with the local children and was

exceptionally demanding - caring for families where there was sickness, engaging in education for the young and teaching the older children how to carry out household duties. In a malarial climate far removed from the physical safety of New Zealand, she eventually succumbed to the disease, not long after her marriage to Ernest Harrison - a lay missionary working on a lonely island (Woodlark Island) off the eastern coast of Papua. She finally, for health reasons, had to leave missionary work entirely and returned to her homeland.

Maisie and her sister Amy, who grew up in a quite remarkable Methodist family. When their father, William Thomas Lill, died in 1939, the Ashburton Guardian, published an obituary of just over two full columns eulogising the death of this ‘pioneer’. In detailing his life in 2024 it is impossible not to acknowledge the continuity between personal faith and community service that marked earlier generations of Methodists, and, of course, Christian churchgoers of all sorts. Their faith was their light, and that light, they firmly believed, was essential to the life of their world. It was to be handed on to the next generation. Their children accepted this worldview because they had seen it being carried out in their daily lives as they grew up. William Thomas Lill, was simply one of thousands of committed Christian women and men in this country who did their absolute best for their fellow citizens. Born in Lincolnshire in 1847, he came to Christchurch when he was 21. He went south to Templeton and was a farmworker there for eight years before being employed for a period by New Zealand Railways at Ashburton - He married Clara Taylor from a local family and with her father ran a bakery and catering business for a time. He moved to Willowby in 1881 and spent the remainder of his life principally as a wheat-grower. He and his wife brought up a large family, many of whom were still resident in the Ashburton district at the time of his death in 1939.

His public service record is quite astonishing. Very quickly he became a mover and shaker in local affairs. He was on the Willowby School Committee for many years, and later was on the boards of both the District High School and the Technical School. He was a member of the Hospital Board, and of the Power Board. He was active in both the Farmers’ Union and the A & P Association. He was an elected member of the County Council from 1911, and his financial acumen was an important part of his contribution to the work of the Council. He was a committed temperance advocate, and all the time he was a devoted member of the Primitive Methodist church – as leader and local preacher and nationally. William Lill was, in fact, one of just two laymen to be appointed President of the Primitive Methodist Conference.

At the time of his death many fine things were said of him, and he was variously described as conscientious, honest, a perseverant person and upright. Doubtless many other folks earned such commendations, but in 1874, the year of his daughter Rose Mary’s (Maisie) birth, William might have simply said that he was doing his duty. Our world still has need of such people, but it is an increasingly regulated world and the good that we might want to do is often hedged by restrictions.