

# **METHODIST CONFERENCE – CHRISTCHURCH 2005**

## **WETERIANA HUI TOOPU – OTAUTAHI**

Paper, power point, proclamations, presentations, programme, process, place, powhiri, prayer, practicalities, pain and pleasure, problems and possibilities, praise, preaching, pasifika, presidential, personalities, punch-lines, pastimes, partnership and much, much more are part of Methodist Conference BUT mostly it is the people, the people the people!

### **PLACES**

#### **Rehua Marae**

A splendid setting for the Powhiri to mark the official opening on conference on the Saturday; cabbage trees in full flower, a nor-wester blowing in the elms relieving the 30 degree heat. We were warmly welcomed by local Ngai Tahu, and the Central South Island Synod.

A time also to pay tribute to deceased Presbyters, Minita-a-iwi, Deacons and Lay people – Ted Bassett, Ralph Benny, Ivan Clucas, Timaru Rogers, John Goffin, John Harding, Ross Lawn, Gordon Leary, Jack McKinney, Huia Martin, Lucy Money, Dorothy Pointon, Matiu Rakena, Celia Te Atakohu Fitzpatrick, Brian Sides, Gordon Thomas, David Trebilco, and Bruce Verry.

#### **Durham Street Methodist Church**

Durham Street Methodist with it's richness of traditional architecture provided a suitable backdrop for the pageantry, praise, prayer and preaching that accompanied the Induction Service for President John Salmon and Vice-President Mary West on Saturday afternoon, and later as tributes were made to retiring Presbyters, Roy Alexander, Judith Parkes, Don Prince, Samiuela Taufu, Norman West and Stan West, and Deacon Kay Wicks. Conference members were involved with churches around Christchurch and its environs on Sunday morning, returning to Durham Street on Sunday afternoon to attend the service of Ordination for Cornelia Grant, Paulo Ieli, Limu Isaia and Leatuao Larry Tupa'i Samuel. Also received into Full Connexion were Laurie Barber, Rachel and Alan Judge, Utumau'u Pupulu and Geraldine Coates.

#### **Canterbury Horticultural Hall**

These premises set in South Hagley Park provided a very suitable venue for the Friday meetings of Tauwi and Te Taha Maori and the full business sessions of conference Monday to Wednesday. We had flexibility of seating and the benefits of a park like setting at our doorstep to enjoy at the tea, coffee and meal breaks – someone even suggested a game of cricket! Sustenance was provided by the Lovely Grub Company.

### **PEOPLE**

Along with all the informal meeting and greeting, conference welcomed representatives of other denominations including the President of the Methodist Church in Samoa the Rev. Dr. Siatua Leulvaialii, and took time to thank Ron Malpass and Kenneth Smith who have now moved into the roles of Ex-President and Ex-Vice President.

Early in the business on Monday conference stood in the traditional manner to affirm the Stationing Sheet. Opportunity was also taken to affirm also people moving into new appointments – Te Rito Peyroux – Facilitator Tauwi Youth Ministry – (began in March 2005), Rev Dr. David Bell – Programme Director, Ministry Development (located in Wellington), David Hanna – Director Wesley Community Action (Wellington), Rev Nigel Hanscamp – Director Pakeha Ministries and Rev Aso Samoa Saleupolu – Director Pasifika Ministries. Conference also placed on record a

memorial prepared by Manukau Synod 'remembering with gratitude David Lange and honouring his achievements.'

During conference the new connexional archivist Jo-Anne Smith was introduced and conference acknowledged the 26 years of service and ministry given in this field by Marcia Baker.

## **PRESENTATION AND PROCESS**

The advent of modern technology particularly data projectors and the use of power point along with decisions to 'do' conference business differently means in most cases reporting is both visual and verbal. Presentations enhanced and high lighted the diverse life of Te Haahi and among those offered and appreciated were...

### **Administration Division**

Rev. Dr. Jim Stuart explored with us an overview of the recently published discussion booklet 'A Theology of Property.' All parishes have received copies and the hope is that property committees will explore this and not let 'bricks and mortar become straight jackets that inhibit growth.'

### **Churches agency on Social Issues (CASI)**

A key focus for the coming year – sustainability and spirituality 'How do we meet the needs of the present without compromising the future.'

### **Ecumenical**

Te Haahi Weteriana has a high commitment to ecumenical partnerships and organisations and many of these had a place in the life of conference. Christian World Service, Decade to Overcome Violence, Churches Broadcasting Commission, Interchurch Tertiary Chaplaincy, Hospital Chaplaincy, Churches Education Commission. Speakers both thanked the church, and encouraged individuals and congregations to continue the commitment.

### **Grey Institute and Robert Gibson Trusts**

The significant work of these two trusts often slip through conference un-noticed. Both trusts involve utilising the assets of land uses. For the Grey Institute Trust the funds benefit Te Taha Maori; for the Roger Gibson Trust the funds are committed to assisting young people and Methodist youth ministry.

### **Inter-church Bioethics Council**

The Council which includes representatives from Te Haahi was offered one of the Conference 'Life Story' slots and Professor Grant Gillet talked with us of stem cell research and the spiritual, ethical and cultural issues that surround this.

### **Methodist Mission and Ecumenical**

We visited the United Church of Papua New Guinea and reflected on our relationship with this part of the world through the eyes of John Roberts; and expressed appreciation of the way John had represented New Zealand member churches of the World Council of Churches during his time on its Central Committee 1998-2005.

### **Tauwi Youth Ministries**

Shared experiences from the Youth Conference early in 2005 and once again reminded us of the significant resolutions issued as a challenge to the whole church by the members of that conference.

## **Touchstone**

It was noted with pleasure that when the Australasian Press Association made its 2005 awards Touchstone received the top award for best newspaper layout.

## **Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (UCANZ)**

Many Conference members are part of uniting congregations with all the variety of 'mixes' that makes these up, and the imagery of 'braided –rivers' to be used at their bi annual Forum to be held shortly in Dunedin honours their unity and diversity.

## **Wesley Com**

The standing committee co-ordinating social services in Aotearoa offered a combined presentation gathering up all the 'Missions' inviting Conference to commit to the Cycle of Hope – Te Tumanako, a moving on from Breaking the Cycle, continuing to affirm, work for, commend, the journey from ka mate (death in the midst of life) to ka ora (life in the midst of death).

## **Wesley Historical Society**

The oldest religious historical society in New Zealand is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year and continues to provide publications and papers documenting the social, cultural and religious history of New Zealand from a Methodist perspective. They held their annual meeting and dinner on the Friday evening followed by a panel discussion on 'Dreams, Designs and Debts: Methodists and their Property.'

## **PROCLAMATIONS**

Many many decisions are made at Conference that affect the life of Connexion, Synod and Parish, and the full transcript of all of these become available towards the end of the year. Noted here...

## **President and Vice-President**

Conference has named the Rev Dr. John Salmon as President and Mrs Mary West as Vice President for 2007.

Four nominations for the offices of President and Vice President were considered by conference. Based upon the Treaty of Waitangi model of bi-cultural partnership, the Methodist Conference uses a partnership decision making process and the views of tangatawhenua and tauiwi are considered in reaching consensus. This year, no consensus was able to be reached upon those nominations.

## **Methodist Provident Society**

Approval was given by conference for the winding up of this Society which has struggled in its 25 year history to find a place in the church.

## **Prince Albert College Trust**

Conference agreed to the PAC Distribution Committees recommendation of a 70% endowment, 10% outside the church, 20% or local parish and mission initiatives being adopted for ten years.

## **Civil Unions Guidelines**

In February 2005 an interim guide for Methodist presbyters and parishes and co operative ventures under Methodist oversight concerning Civil Unions was sent out by the President. These guidelines were re visited at conference, adjusted, clarified and confirmed.

## **Travel and Study Committee**

This Connexional Committee found itself this year with a 'cupboard that was bare', and to guarantee future funding for Travel and Study conference agreed to authorise a connexional appeal for the connexional year 2006-2007. This fund is available to lay and ordained leaders.

### **PLEASURE**

Opportunities existed around the life of conference for groups to gather formally and informally to eat-laugh-talk-celebrate. The Evangelical Network offered an evening of entertainment and reflection 'Body and Soul' with Peter Majendie faith and art speaker. They also had a breakfast, and shared with us a new structure for the network in 2006.

The Methodist Lay Preachers Network had their annual gathering and lunch on Sunday and in the evening the Rev. Bill Wallace offered an ecumenical occasion 'Exploring Worship in a Pluralistic World.'

We ALL derived much pleasure from the musical gifts of one Rob Salmon who composed the music for the recessional at the Induction Service 'Past, the Present', its rhythm and beat stimulated and energised conference members each time it was played.

### **PRAISE**

Many aspects of conference were worthy of praise – people listening to one another, affirming one another, expressing themselves with honesty, owning their struggles, and being prepared to take risks in all our diversity to find appropriate ways of being Christian and being church.

The reports of the Synods, of Sinoti Samoa, of Vahefonua Tonga O Aotearoa, of Waswase ko viti Rotuma e Niusiladi and of Te Taha Maori contained accounts of exciting and positive strategies and plans for future direction and action.

Within the Board of Ministry reports and presentation to conference there were more significant comments on the shape of future development, especially in response to the Hui on Ministry held earlier in 2005.

### **PRAYER**

The Conference sessions that began and ended each day invited us to respond with all our senses, the touch of water as we reaffirmed our baptism, the visual of God's creation, the tensile strength and flexibility of a 'rubber band' (connected of course to other rubber bands), the uplifting music of the Koauau, the gentle flow of the song 'Be Still and know that I am God.'

And then that final act of commitment as at the end of Conference we share bread and wine and covenant with one another and our God to work and worship together as we move into the future.

### **PRESIDENTIAL**

President John and Vice-President Mary planned well to ensure the conference benefited from their thoughtful pastoral and theological gifts. Members appreciated the 'Presidential Reflection' slots and the time set aside to enable members to also have their say.

The Presidential Address is available in an expanded printed form and commended to ALL congregations as a text for discussion. It charges the church to focus in three areas **being church**, **engaging with the word** and **thinking our faith** as we consider the question –

**“What does it mean to be Christian and Church in the kind of world we face today?”**