

METHODIST MISSION & ECUMENICAL

Methodist Mission and Ecumenical (MM&E) is the official agency of the Methodist Church of New Zealand (MCNZ) that promotes the church's overseas mission church relationships, its ecumenical relationships both local and international, as well as its confessional (Methodist) relationships.

Information and reporting back

Partner mission church relationships

United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI)

Strategic planning workshop

Mission and Ecumenical funded a UCSI strategic planning workshop held at Munda in October 2007. Participants included regional, hospital, theological seminary, and assembly office staff. Participant evaluations showed it to have been a worthwhile exercise.

Children's and Youth Centre

Plans for the Children's and Youth Centre at Munda, being significantly funded from donations for the 2006 Mission and Ecumenical special appeal, have now been approved and at the time of writing this report were going out to tender. A local architect has been engaged to oversee the project.

Goldie College



The focus of the Mission and Ecumenical special appeal for 2008 has been the provision of science equipment for Goldie College. There has been a very encouraging response to this appeal from around the connexion. The equipment was sourced from a New Zealand company, based in Waiuku that specialises in supplying science equipment to schools in the Pacific Islands. The first consignment of equipment was sent in July.

In May a fire destroyed the administration and staff block at the college. Several donations were received from around the connexion and were used to purchase two laptop computers and printers as requested by the college. These were sent at the same time as the science equipment which arrived at the college in August.

Seghe Theological Seminary

This year we have assisted four UCSI students to train for ministry by covering the cost of their tuition and accommodation fees. The students were selected on the basis of financial need and academic potential.

Copra project

This project at Vonunu on Vella Lavella Island was launched in November 2004 with an establishment grant, followed by a loan for a boat purchase. Much work had to be done on the boat to make it operational. It came into service in March 2008. Detailed reports have been regularly received from the project manager reporting on short, medium, and long term plans. The project is making a modest financial return. Its greatest benefit is the impact it is having on local communities, providing them with an income.

Helena Goldie Hospital

Mission and Ecumenical continues to pay salaries for the Director of Nursing and for relieving nurses at Helena Goldie Hospital. Salary levels were reviewed in late 2007 to bring them into line with similar positions in government run hospitals. In 2008 Director of Nursing, Chris Leve has been studying for a Bachelor in Nursing Administration and Education at the University of Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby. He will return to Helena Goldie Hospital in 2009.

Mission and Ecumenical has provided funding to enable the hospital's radiologist to undertake further training at the National Referral Hospital in Honiara from July to December.

Nurse Training School

The proposed Davinia Taylor memorial building will provide the teaching base for the new Nurse Training School to be opened at Helena Goldie Hospital at the beginning of 2010. The building will provide teaching rooms, a library and seminar facilities. Construction is under way and the building is expected to be completed late 2008 or early 2009.

In January Mission and Ecumenical provided funding for the purchase of text books for use by the new Nurse Training School.

Sasamugga Hospital

This year Mission and Ecumenical has begun providing assistance for UCSI's Sasamugga Hospital on remote Choiseul Island. Initial assistance has been for the cost of new staff houses to replace those destroyed in the April 2007 tsunami, and for computer equipment. Future assistance will be provided for a canoe and outboard motor to enable the hospital to provide basic health care to villages in its catchment area. We are grateful to Te Atatu Union parish for making this a fund raising project in 2008.

United Church in Papua New Guinea (UCPNG)

Rarongo Theological College



Ongoing funding has been provided for the purchase of books for the college library. Mission and Ecumenical is grateful for the practical assistance of Dr Keith Carley in this regard.

Scholarships which cover payment of course fees continue to be provided for four students in training for ministry at Rarongo Theological College. Students have been selected by Rarongo faculty staff on the basis of financial need and study potential. Remaining funds from Mission and Ecumenical's 2007 special appeal, to enable the college to

access internet and e-mail, are still held pending PNG Telekom installing cable to the college.

Project funding

Discussion is underway with the UCPNG Assembly office on future project assistance. This has begun with support being provided for the new Papuan Gulf Region of the church. This is a maritime region where a boat is essential for getting around. Provision of funds for a dinghy, outboard motor, life jackets and a fuel tank, will greatly assist regional staff outreach to teachers and health workers, as well as women's, children's and youth ministries.

40th Anniversary

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the forming of the independent United Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In 1996 the Solomon Islands Church separated to form its own United Church. The UCPNG marked the anniversary at various times during the year. The 21st General Assembly in October, hosted by the Keapara Circuit in the East Central Papuan Region, was the culmination of the celebrations. The Methodist Church of New Zealand was invited to this gathering. The Mission and Ecumenical secretary was unable to travel at that time. At the time of writing this report the matter of attendance was still being considered.

Disaster responses

In the past year Mission and Ecumenical has contributed to two emergency appeals launched by Christian Word Service: the Cyclone Nargis appeal for victims of the cyclone in Burma/Myanmar, (May 2008); and the Darfur appeal (August 2008). \$2,000 was provided in each instance.

Appreciation

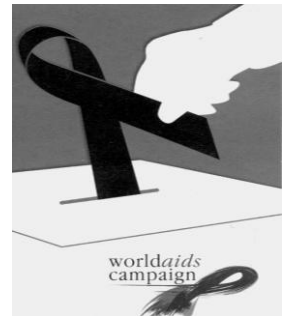
Mission and Ecumenical appreciates the considerable support it receives from Methodist Women's Fellowship groups, parishes, and from individual church members, for mission activity in the life of the United Church in the Solomon Islands, Helena Goldie Hospital, Sasamugga hospital, Goldie College, and in the life of the United Church in Papua New Guinea, including Rarongo Theological College. This second mile giving enables us to do so much more in assisting our partner mission churches.

HIV and AIDS

Workshops and Conference

Following the discussion on HIV and AIDS at the Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific (MCCP) meeting in Auckland April 2007, two workshops were facilitated by Mission and Ecumenical (at the request of the President and Vice-President) at Methodist Conference 2007.

Workshop participants asked the Methodist Conference to note the statement of the MCCP and that of Methodist Church of New Zealand participants and asked parishes to engage with the issues raised in these statements and report to their respective synods in 2008.



Lack of response

It is disappointing there has been so little response to this request. In part we put this down to other institutional church matters crowding out consideration of such an issue by synods this year. It may also be that some do not see HIV and AIDS as a significant issue for us in Aotearoa New Zealand at this time. Yet we need to heed the words of the Christian Conference of Asia draft policy on HIV and AIDS which states "Unfortunately, many countries that have a low prevalence do not see the point of engaging with the issue, and this needs to be addressed." On a more positive note the secretary was invited to be resource person for the Trinity College students intensive on HIV and AIDS in August.

Resource available

Mission and Ecumenical is producing a resource to encourage discussion of HIV and AIDS as requested by the Conference workshops. This resource will be in two parts. The first a series of studies *Exploring solutions: How to Talk about HIV Prevention in the Church* produced by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance in Geneva. The second, several documents, most dealing with HIV and AIDS from Pacific and Aotearoa New Zealand perspectives. This resource should be available at Methodist Conference 2008

Ecumenical relationships

Methodist Ecumenical Consultation

This consultation continues to meet twice a year and includes representatives of the Mission and Ecumenical Committee, the Faith and Order Committee, and Mission Resourcing. It is a forum for sharing ecumenical endeavours which are spread across these three Methodist agencies. It is not a decision making body.

Anglican Methodist dialogue

The Mission and Ecumenical secretary, and committee members Sheila Thorne and Uesifili Unasa participate in this dialogue with Faith and Order Committee convenor Terry Wall and others. In 2008 a covenant has been drafted. It was presented to the Anglican General Synod in May 2008 and was agreed to. Faith and Order will bring it to Conference 2008. Mission and Ecumenical is fully supportive of the proposed covenant.

New ecumenical initiative

Methodist conference 2007 reaffirmed its commitment to a national expression of the ecumenical

movement by churches in Aotearoa New Zealand in a form yet to be determined; resolved, in cooperation with those churches and individuals who have been on the traditional ecumenical journey, to create an ecumenical space to explore the meaning of ecumenical vision in this time and place; and encouraged the Mission and Ecumenical Committee to explore with other traditionally ecumenically minded churches and individuals (by Pentecost 2008) how such an ecumenical space may be initiated. The Mission and Ecumenical Committee developed a strategy to this end and discussed this with President Brian Turner who took the initiative in calling church leaders from the Anglican, Baptist, Christian Churches on New Zealand, Methodist, Presbyterian, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Roman Catholic, Salvation Army churches to meet in Wellington to respond to the Methodist initiative. It was a positive meeting that agreed to the need for an ecumenical space where these churches could engage with one another, and agreed to further discussion on the matter. A paper on a theology for ecumenism and an ecumenical landscape map were prepared for discussion at a meeting on 3 September 2008.

Ecumenical Coalition for Justice

This is an informal coalition of people from the Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. It has produced resources on free trade, for general elections, and on child poverty, the Treaty of Waitangi and the foreshore and seabed debate. The coalition has completed work on an educational project which explores the relationship between affluence and poverty. It can be downloaded from the group's website: www.socialjustice.org.nz

World Council of Churches (WCC)

Ecumenical Officers meeting

The secretary attended a WCC Ecumenical Officers meeting 19-23 May at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva, which was preceded by a one day ecumenical formation event. A day was also spent at the WCC's ecumenical centre in Geneva contacting staff members. The meeting provided:

- An opportunity to hear from Desmond Tutu who was in Geneva to address the World Health Organisation;
- A chance to hear from WCC programme directors
- Sharing in groups on the life of our churches and reporting back in plenary;
- Update on the work of the WCC Youth commission;
- Visioning - our world today and ecumenism tomorrow, led by two young ecumenists;
- Sharing in groups on ecumenical witness today and tomorrow, and reporting back in plenary;
- Meeting with WCC programme staff on elective issues:

Ecclesiology document

The task group considering the Faith and Order Commission's document *The Nature and Mission of the Church* has met throughout the year. Its response appears in Appendix 1.

Living Letters visit

As part of the Methodist strategy toward a new national ecumenical initiative the idea of a visit from World Council of Churches leaders to WCC member churches in Aotearoa New Zealand was suggested. This was shared with the WCC. Its General Secretary, Sam Kobia, has responded positively, noting it has been many years since the fellowship of WCC member churches visited member churches in this country. The sending of a 'living letters' team to our churches, he notes, would be an important expression of solidarity and fellowship. This will be the subject of ongoing discussion with all churches participating in the discussions around a new national ecumenical future.

Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

Consultation attended



Jan Fogg attended a CCA consultation on *Ecology, Economy and Accountability* 15-17 May in Seoul, Korea. Her report is available on request. Jan has said, "I found it a stimulating and rewarding experience and thank you very much for encouraging my application. I have to confess to much ignorance about CCA and was very impressed by the work they are involved in." Jan also had an article about the consultation published in the July issue of Touchstone.

Life and work review

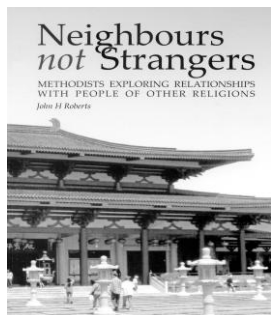
The CCA General Assembly in 2007 decided that the time was right for a review of the life and mission of CCA. The terms of reference have been received with a covering letter. The objectives of the review include:

- Assessing the institutional capacity of CCA and identify key organisational areas requiring change;
- Assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of CCA programmes;
- Assessing CCA's relationship with member churches and councils;
- Identifying key challenges, tensions and possible directions for the coming years.

A team of evaluators will facilitate the review. Mission and Ecumenical will respond to the review questionnaire when it is received.

Interreligious relationships

Secretary's publication



The book *Neighbours not Strangers: Methodists Exploring Relationships with People of Other Religions* was launched at the Auckland Synod meeting on 15 March. It sets out the contribution of a number of scholars in the Methodist tradition to interreligious relations and a theology of religions. Beginning with a section on John Wesley it proceeds to outline the contribution of five 20th century pioneers and four contemporary scholars. The contributions of some others who have been working in the area are briefly described and some conclusions on how we might learn from these scholars for reflection and action now, are made. The book is available for \$15.00 from Epworth Books 0800-755355, sales@epworthbooks.org.nz

Open letter from Muslim leaders

On 20 December President Brian Turner referred "An Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders" for a response. A précis of the open letter together with some recommendations for consideration by both the Mission and Ecumenical and Faith and Order Committees was compiled. Some comments from a commentary on the open letter from the World Council of Churches *Learning to Explore Love Together* were also included. It was prepared to assist WCC member churches in responding to the Muslim open letter. The response document was sent around the connexion in April for feedback. An article on this paper was published in the May issue of Touchstone. Two responses from synods were positive - Nelson Marlborough West Coast; and the combined synods of Hawkes Bay Manawatu, Taranaki Wanganui, and Wellington. The document is included in this report as Appendix 2

World Methodist relationships

World Methodist Council and Conference

The World Methodist Council has sent regular electronic communications each month during this year and these have been circulated through emessenger and the Church website. The Presidium met in

Bulgaria late September and a major focus of their agenda was the planning for the next world Conference in Durban South Africa in 2011. Because of the proximity to the New Zealand Methodist Conference, the General Secretary did not attend this meeting. Details of this meeting were not available at the time of writing this brief report but will be circulated when they are available. The World Council continues to support members in countries where there is war or political unrest and urges member churches to remember these countries in prayer.

Visit of British Methodist Church leaders

The President of the British Methodist Conference, Stephen Poxon, and his wife, Myrtlea former Vice-President, visited New Zealand 25-28 July. They were accompanied by Chris Elliott (secretary for External Relationships) and Steve Pearce (Asia Pacific Secretary). Meetings with them were arranged in Christchurch and Auckland. These provided an opportunity for conversation around matters of mutual interest.

Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific

The 2008 meeting which was to be hosted by the Methodist Church of Fiji in April 2008 was postponed because of the situation in Fiji.

Education and communication

The secretary has been involved in a range of communication and education activities. These have included: monthly newsletters; occasional papers; articles in 'Touchstone'; preaching engagements; presentations to MWF groups; working with Trinity Meadowbank and Ministry Training Unit students; and displays to promote Mission and Ecumenical relationships and activity. PowerPoint presentations have been used where appropriate and possible. The secretary has engaged in professional development, study and reading in the areas of mission and ecumenism.

Restructuring

In April the Mission and Ecumenical Committee was informed that the Board of Ministry Commissioner had produced a report on a wider restructuring of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The President and the General Secretary met with the committee in May to alert it to this and invite discussion on the Commissioner's report dated 25 March 2008. The committee considered the Commissioner's report and made a written response. It subsequently met with the Commissioner for a dialogue on his report and particularly its implications for Mission and Ecumenical. Following the meeting it sent a written statement of the key points it wanted to make to the Commissioner. There had been no time for the Mission and Ecumenical Committee to consider either the Commissioner's revised report of 16 July or the President's report to the August synods before this report to Conference was written. It is hoped there will be opportunity for further discussion and consultation in 2009.

Strategic plan

Our vision

Our vision is to see mission and ecumenical endeavour as the very core of our church's being. Mission to be given expression at the global as well as the local level. Existing partner church relationships being renewed and rebuilt, with new relationships able to be developed. Ecumenical thinking and action to be seen as essential to our church's life. Supporting and encouraging existing ecumenical relationships while looking for new expressions of ecumenism.

Key goals

Our key goals are to:

- Use the "Transforming Mission" and the "To be Methodist is to be Ecumenical" papers as working documents that provide a theological base for the work of the committee and secretary.
- Support and strengthen the world-wide mission of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, in particular the partnership relationships with the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the

United Church of the Solomon Islands, through personal visits, regular correspondence and sharing of resources

- Promote and strengthen relationships with ecumenical agencies of which the Methodist Church of New Zealand is a member: Christian World Service, Churches Agency on International issues, Christian Conference of Asia, and the World Council of Churches.
- Promote an awareness of religious diversity within Aotearoa New Zealand and the fostering of good relationships between religions.
- Promote the relationships of the Methodist Church of New Zealand with world Methodism.
- Produce resources on ecumenism and mission, suitable for use in parishes and rohe.
- Further develop effective communication with parishes, rohe and uniting congregations, through monthly newsletters, occasional papers, information leaflets and articles in "Touchstone".

Appendix 1

Response to World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper 198, 2005

The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement

Draft response of Methodist Church of New Zealand

Background

This World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order Commission document seeks to affirm what the churches can say together about the Church, and to identify and clarify issues over which the churches continue to differ. The WCC hopes that this text will play an important part in serving the call "to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship." In the light of responses from the churches the text will be revised and developed. It is hoped the process will make a significant contribution to the churches' growing understanding of being church, and to the resolution of divisive issues. Churches have been asked to respond to the text by the end of January 2010.

The Mission and Ecumenical Committee, the Faith and Order Committee, and Te Taha Maori of the Methodist Church of New Zealand (MCNZ) have worked together in developing a response to the text of this WCC Faith and Order paper. Those involved in the process have been: Hugh Dyson (Mission and Ecumenical), Lana Lazarus (Te Taha Maori), TeRito Peyroux (Youth), Siosifa Pole (Faith and Order), John Roberts (Mission and Ecumenical), Diana Tana (Te Taha Maori), Terry Wall (Faith and Order). We met on four occasions in 2008, each time considering a different section of the text.

Overall we felt that the Faith and Order Commission has produced a significant and helpful text, and that it is serving the churches and the cause of ecumenism well.

Introduction

The MCNZ expresses its gratitude that the WCC Faith and Order Commission is developing what we hope will become a significant text in the life of the churches. We appreciate the work of all those members of the commission who have been contributing to the development of the text. There is much in the text that we can readily affirm, and some areas where we raise questions or express concerns. We commend the commission for bringing together in one text, both the nature of the church and the mission of the church, because so often, in theology and the life of the churches, these are dealt with separately. We affirm the purpose of the text in seeking to give expression to what the churches can now say together about the nature and mission of the church, and within that agreement, to explore the extent to which the remaining church-dividing issues may be overcome. We appreciate the overall emphasis the text places on the centrality of worship.

We note that the numbered paragraphs in the main text set out what are seen to be common perspectives across the churches, while the boxed sections identify areas where differences remain

both within and between churches.

Section I The Church of the Triune God

A The nature of the Church

We affirm subsection (I) The Church as Gift of God.

Regarding the boxed section **The Institutional Dimension of the Church and the Work of the Holy Spirit** we hold that:

- The power of the Word and Spirit of God in the Church is not confined to ordained ministry but is embodied in the whole community of faith by virtue of the baptism of its members. The ministry of the laity is as important as the ministry of the ordained.
- God's work is not confined to the institutional structures of the Church. God can work outside those structures in order to challenge them.
- The Church can exercise episcopate without being episcopal i.e. having bishops.

We affirm subsection (II) Biblical Insights. However we have a concern regarding paragraph 18 which relates to the church being seen as the "Israel of God." Does the Church supersede Israel? We find any suggestion of a supersessionist theology to be unhelpful in the context of Christian-Jewish relations.

B The mission of the Church

While we affirm much of this section we have a concern. We are uneasy with the note of Christian triumphalism that appears: as in para 34 gathering all creation under the lordship of Christ; para 36 reconciling all things to God through Christ; para 37 salvation of the whole world; para 41 proclaiming Christ with everyone throughout the entire world. In an increasingly religiously plural world where we are called to respect the diversity of religions, such references leave us feeling uncomfortable. We ask that attention be paid to this concern in further development of the text. We are not calling for the abandonment of these important New Testament themes, but rather their reformulation.

C The Church as Sign and Instrument of God's Intention and Plan for the World

Again we affirm much of this section but express a similar concern to that raised regarding the previous section of the text, the note of Christian triumphalism that is apparent as in: para 43, the Church as sign and instrument of God's intention and plan for the whole world; para 44 the Church rendering praise and thanks on behalf of all peoples. Our question is this: Is this claiming too much for the Church? Again we ask that attention be paid to this concern in further development of the text.

Section II The Church in History

A The Church *in via*

We affirm this section of the text. Regarding the boxed section **The Church as 'Sacrament'**, the Methodist Church of New Zealand would not normally use the language of Church as sacrament, seeing a distinction between the Church and the sacraments for both reasons cited in the text. We would hold to the view that the church is an instrument for God's purpose in the world.

Regarding the boxed section "The Church and Sin" we note that some deep and complex questions are raised here. While the sin of a member or leader may not tarnish the holiness of the Church, when sin becomes systemic it does tarnish the holiness of the Church. Maybe there is a question of scale at work in this way of thinking. We would affirm that while the Church is a holy instrument of God, it does in reality sin, and that sin can become systemic in the institutional life of the church. We can affirm the proposed statement on the relationship between sin and holiness.

B In Christ – But Not Yet in Full Communion

We affirm this section of the text.

C Communion and Diversity

We affirm this section of the text. The boxed section **Limits to Diversity** deals with ecclesial identity and how one church regards the ecclesial status of other churches. It clearly sets out the various

positions and the challenge to the ecumenical movement at this time. The very real and difficult issues are clearly identified. The pressing ecumenical question identified in the final sentence is a very real challenge to the ecumenical movement in the 21st century – Whether and how churches can live in mutual accountability so that they can sustain one another in unity and legitimate diversity, and can prevent new issues from becoming causes of division within and between churches.

D The Church as Communion of Local Churches

We affirm paragraphs 64 and 65. Regarding para 66 on apostolicity and catholicity as sustaining the communion of local churches, we strongly identify with the goal relating to the search for full communion. However we have some questions about the statement that the Church of Jesus Christ is to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Can the Church not change through time as new insights and wisdoms emerge? Can the Church be seen as alive and dynamic and able to adapt to rapidly changing contexts?

Regarding the boxed section **Local Church** our church affirms that each local church, however defined, is united to every other in the universal Church and contains within it the fullness of what it is to be the Church. We acknowledge that the discrepancy identified in the final sentence, between theological descriptions of local church and how the local church is experienced by the faithful, can be very real for people.

Section III The Life of Communion in and for the World

A Apostolic Faith

We affirm this section of the text

B Baptism

We affirm this section of the text. Regarding the boxed section **Baptism** our church recognises the unresolved issues. As a church we baptise both infants and those of an age to make profession of faith; we recognise other churches' baptism and do not rebaptise; we recognise baptism as a sacrament; we recognise baptism as both effecting and reflecting the new life in Christ; we baptise with water using the Trinitarian formula.

C Eucharist

We affirm this section of the text

Regarding the boxed section **Eucharist** our church recognises the significant differences identified and sees these as an expression of legitimate diversity. For our church the Eucharist is primarily a service of thanksgiving which acknowledges the sacrifice of Christ. We affirm a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the celebration. We practise open hospitality i.e. all who know and love Jesus Christ are welcome at the Eucharistic table.

D Ministry of All the Faithful

While we affirm much of this section of the text, we feel that it fails to fully recognise the importance of the role of the laity in the life of our churches. Whereas the ecumenical movement once attached considerable significance to the role of the laity (having a department on the role of the laity), this now seems to have fallen off the agenda. This section needs strengthening to recognise the crucial role the laity have in the life of the Church. We note that the word laity is not used in the text. Has there been a conscious move away from using that term, and if so why?

E Ministry of the Ordained

We affirm this section of the text. Regarding the boxed section **Ordained Ministry** we acknowledge that there are areas still needing exploration. Our church would put more emphasis on the ministry of the ordained being with and amongst the people of God rather than over them. For us the norm is that the ordained administer the sacraments and preside at the Eucharist, however in exceptional circumstances a lay person may be authorised to do so. Ordination is open to both men and women. We see ourselves as being in apostolic continuity if not in episcopal succession as other churches understand that term.

F Oversight: Personal, Communal, Collegial

We affirm this section of the text. Regarding the boxed section **Episcopate, Bishops and Apostolic succession**, we believe it correctly sets out the positions of the churches. At this time ours is a non-episcopal church that values its own form of the exercise of episcopate through its annual conference; the appointment of a president on an annual basis to preside over the national church; the regional synods and the appointment of synod superintendents to take oversight of the church in the regions. In the 1970s there was a willingness on the part of our church to accept an episcopal form of church government in a church that would have united five separate denominations. However the union did not happen. We would not rule out acceptance of an episcopal form of church government for our church in the future.

G Conciliarity and Primacy

We affirm the nature of conciliarity (para 99); the origins of ‘ecumenical councils’ (para 100), and the historical statement (para 102). However we have some questions. Can there be a joint presiding involving more than one person? (para 101). The claim that “In recent years, both ecumenical rapprochement and globalisation have created a new climate in which a universal primacy can be seen as a gift rather than a threat to other churches” (para 103) needs to be tested. Our church has not considered the matter of a universal primacy at this time. Discussion on a universal primacy (para 104) needs to be ongoing. However we suspect there would be little enthusiasm for discussing a ministry of universal primacy in our church.

Regarding the boxed section **Conciliarity and Universal Primacy** we believe this correctly sets out the situation of divergence on this matter. The word ‘today’ could be added to the last sentence of the second paragraph.

H Authority

Authority is not a word our church makes much use of. We prefer to talk about responsibility and accountability. Authority is open to abuse, which is why we consider responsibility and accountability must be essential parts of the exercise of authority.

Section IV In and for the World

We affirm this section of the text, while raising questions about the wording of paragraphs 110 and 111.

Para 110 raises concerns in the area of interreligious relations. “Proclaiming to every creature” suggests a Christian triumphalism that may well be offensive to people of other religions. The final sentence, “There is no contradiction between evangelisation and respect for the values present in other faiths” needs some clarification if it is to remain. While it may be true in a technical sense, there are too many instances where this has not been the case in practice. Evangelisation is a term that can mean different things to different people. The text needs to take account of this.

In paragraph 111 we feel the reference to Acts 5:29 needs a little more elaboration. Is there a sharp disjunction between God's truth and human truth? How do we receive God's truth if not through human agency? Yet we can be mistaken even in our best convictions.

Conclusion

We affirm this concluding section of the report.

Appendix 2

Responding to an Open letter to Christian leaders from Muslim leaders

Muslims in New Zealand

Muslims first appear in a New Zealand census in 1874. Most of the early Muslims to come here were

from Fiji and India. According to the 2006 census there were 35,976 Muslims living in New Zealand. Their numbers have been growing rapidly with a 490% increase since the 1991 census. Today Muslims living in New Zealand have come from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, with a growing number of New Zealand born Muslims. Many have come to this country to escape conflict in their home countries, or to further their education, and seek employment opportunities. Many of the more recent arrivals have come under the New Zealand Government's humanitarian/refugee immigration category. In most of our larger urban centres mosques and Islamic centres have been established.

The events of 11th September 2001 in the USA lifted the profile of Muslims around the world, and led to negative stereotyping. Muslims came to be seen as fundamentalists and Islam a religion that breeds terrorists. As a result some Muslims in New Zealand have experienced harassment, physical attack and vandalism of their property. In January 2003, several of the New Zealand Muslim communities signed a declaration denouncing all forms of terrorism and stated clearly that Islam promotes peace and security for all humankind. In response to the growth in the number of Muslims in New Zealand and concern at stereotyping and negative experiences in the Islamic community, Councils of Christians and Muslims have been formed. These exist in various communities including Auckland and Wellington. The councils seek to encourage dialogue, build understanding, and create trust between the two religious communities. Methodists are active in the life of these councils.

Open letter of Muslim leaders

In October 2007 138 Muslim leaders from various parts of the world met at the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan. Their objective was to develop *A Common Word between us and you*. The result was a 29 page open letter addressed to 27 world leaders of the various branches of the Christian Church, as well as to leaders of Christian Churches everywhere. (Available at www.acommonword.com) The letter was issued on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr al-Mubarak, the festivity that marks the end of Ramadan, Islam's holiest month.

The letter acknowledges that Muslims and Christians together make up over half of the world's population and says that without peace and justice between the two religious communities there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The basis of this peace and understanding is at the core both faiths – love of the One God and love of the neighbour. This they say is repeatedly stated in the sacred texts of both Islam and Christianity and is the common ground which Muslims and Christians can stand on together. It is on this basis that the Muslim leaders invite Christians to join them in expressing that which is most essential to the faith and practice of both – the two commandments of love.

The Muslim leaders state that while Islam and Christianity are obviously different religions it is clear that the two greatest commandments are an area of common ground and a link between the Qur'an, the Torah and the New Testament. They quote the Qur'an where God tells Muslims to issue the following call to Christians (and Jews) "O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you." That common word, the leaders say, is found in the two greatest commandments.

The leaders state that as Muslims, we say to Christians that we are not against them and that Islam is not against them (so long as they do not wage war against Muslims on account of their religion, oppress them and drive them out of their homes). Quoting words of Jesus the leaders invite Christians to consider Muslims as not being against them, but with them. On this basis they invite Christians to join Muslims on the common essentials of the two religions. "Let this common ground be the basis of all future interfaith dialogue between us."

The leaders go on to say "Finding common ground between Muslims and Christians is not simply a matter for polite ecumenical dialogue between selected religious leaders." It is about the future of the world, for "If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace." The leaders challenge those who relish conflict and destruction for their own sake, or reckon that ultimately they stand to gain through them, stating that "our very eternal souls are at stake if we fail to sincerely make every effort to make peace and come together in harmony."

The letter concludes: "So let our differences not cause hatred and strife between us. Let us vie with each other only in righteousness and good works. Let us respect each other, be fair, just and kind to [one] another and live in sincere peace, harmony and mutual good will."

Commentary of World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has prepared a commentary on the open letter *A Common Word Between Us and You* to assist both the council and its member churches in developing their responses. A meeting of leaders engaged in the field of Christian-Muslim relations considered the open letter and the commentary *Learning to Explore Love Together* (available on the interreligious dialogue pages at www.wcc-coe.org) was the outcome of their deliberation. The WCC commentary sees in *A Common Word Between Us and You* a clear indication that leading Muslim leaders and religious leaders are committed to fresh thinking about the relationship between Islam and Christianity. An action that is to be applauded.

While *A Common Word Between Us and You* affirms what the two religions have in common it also acknowledges that there are very real differences between Christianity and Islam and these should not be minimised. There are divergences and differences that resist all efforts at resolution. Amongst these are the Christian difficulty of appreciating Muhammad as a prophet, and the Muslim difficulty of appreciating Jesus as God incarnate. At the same time as they seek to enhance what they have in common, the commentary sees a pressing necessity for Christians and Muslims to find ways of acknowledging and respecting the differences between them, of attempting to understand these, and of not allowing them to fuel hostility. While affirming examples of humane mutual respect, it says both Christians and Muslims need to actively work to heal hurts both, local and global, and to change attitudes and stereotypes.

Even when Christians and Muslims continue to disagree on matters of belief the commentary urges that they should seek to recognise and endorse what they hold in common with sufficient integrity to allow them to work together in the world. They should make it a priority to understand how the precious heritages they each hold can direct and even impel them to work together for justice and peace. So Christians and Muslims should come together not only in a common word but also in common action for the greater glory of God and the wellbeing of all.

Suggested Decisions:

Report

1. The report is received.

United Churches in the Solomon Islands and in Papua New Guinea

2. Conference affirms the continuing significant relationship with the United Church in the Solomon Islands, and the United Church in Papua New Guinea, and the assistance being provided to them through Methodist Mission and Ecumenical.

HIV and AIDS resource

3. Conference encourages parishes and rohe to engage with the issues surrounding HIV and AIDS using the resource pack prepared by Methodist Mission and Ecumenical and available at Conference 2008.

New ecumenical initiative

4. Conference affirms the ongoing discussion amongst leaders of traditionally ecumenically minded churches towards a possible new national ecumenical initiative, and looks forward to a positive outcome.
5. Conference notes the significant contribution of Rev Brian Turner to this discussion in his presidential year.
6. Noting the desirability of continuity of church leadership participation at this early stage of the dialogue, Conference requests Brian Turner to continue alongside John Roberts, Mission and

Ecumenical Secretary, who is acting as a resource person for the dialogue. (Note at this stage there are to be just two representatives from each participating church.)

World Council of Churches

7. That the response to the World Council of Churches Faith and Order paper *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* as set out in Appendix 1 be approved as that of the Methodist Church of New Zealand.
8. Conference affirms the suggestion of a “Living Letters” visit by leaders of the World Council of Churches to its member churches in Aotearoa New Zealand in late 2009 or early 2010.

Responding to open letter from Muslim leaders

9. Conference welcomes the open letter addressed to Christian leaders by the Muslim leaders who met in Jordan in October 2007 and:
 - a) while acknowledging some profound differences of belief between Christians and Muslims, affirms that the two commandments to love God and neighbour constitute a common element in the faith and practice of our two religious traditions;
 - b) accepts the invitation to see Islam as not being against us but with us as we seek to realise the two commandments of love;
 - c) acknowledges the need for the two religions to work together for a meaningful peace with justice in the world;
 - d) joins with Muslims in challenging those who would promote violence and conflict for their own sake or personal gain;
 - e) encourages the promotion of justice, respect, fairness, kindness, healing, harmony and goodwill between the followers of Islam and Christianity, locally, nationally and internationally;
 - f) urges that the open letter be considered and promoted by local Councils of Christians and Muslims, Interfaith Councils, and be widely discussed within the Methodist Church of New Zealand;
 - g) encourages local congregations to enter with care and sensitivity into conversation with local Mosque or Islamic Centre communities.

Committee membership

10. The Mission and Ecumenical Committee membership for 2007 be: Keith Hopner (convener), Margaret Donald, Hugh Dyson, Kilifi Heimuli, Keita Hotere, Barry Jones, Lana Lazarus, TeRito Peyroux, Shanti Sinnaduray, Sheila Thorne, Uesifili Unasa.

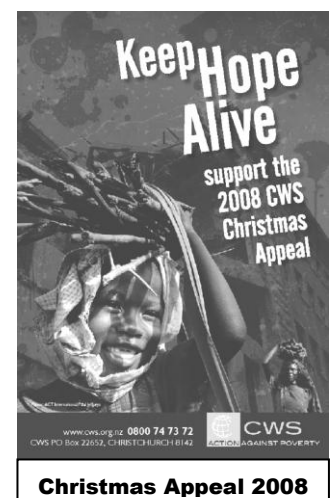
Christian World Service

‘Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings’ – Nelson Mandela.

Introduction

Christian World Service takes action to end poverty and injustice throughout the world. It is a proudly New Zealand organisation, governed by a New Zealand Board and responsible to a Council appointed by the national bodies of its supporting churches. The Methodist appointee on that Council is the Rev John Roberts, and I would like to thank him for his hard work and support for CWS.

Methodists are strong supporters of the ecumenical work of CWS with around three quarters of Methodist and Uniting Congregation parishes giving to CWS’s annual Christmas Appeal. Many also support the work of CWS either by being regular donors or by contributing to our emergency and @world appeals. Thank you for this loyal support, we rely on it for our work.



Christmas Appeal 2008

Methodist Women's Fellowship

Christian World Service greatly appreciates the close working relationship it has with the Methodist Women's Fellowship (MWF). The money raised for the annual joint MWF/APW Special Project qualifies for subsidy under the NZAID KOHA scheme and has enabled CWS, in the last 10 years, to contribute over \$1,200,000 towards the work of our development partners. The project supported in 2007/08 was the work of the House of Passage, a programme that provides opportunities and hope to vulnerable young girls growing up in an impoverished and violent squatter settlement in Recife, Brazil. The project chosen by the MWF/APW for 2008/09 is the work of the Women's programme of the Luru Land Conference of Tribal Communities in Luru (Choiseul) in the Solomon Islands. To support the fundraising CWS has made a documentary film on the work of this partner and the challenges of balancing the protection of their land, forests and water resources with the need to have a cash income to meet health, education, transport and other costs. The documentary (in either video or DVD format) is available to borrow from cws@cws.org.nz.

The Aid Grant

The 2% aid grant from the Methodist Church (\$11,000) was used for programmes in Uganda, Timor Leste, India, and Cambodia. Programmes ranged from family food production and new income opportunities, to HIV and AIDS community care, environmental protection and human rights training. CWS is most appreciative of this support by the Methodist Church; it is an important demonstration of commitment to international development work.

William Waters Trust

The income received from the William Waters Trust for the benefit of children worldwide was used to support the work of partners in: Timor Leste, Fiji, India and Brazil.

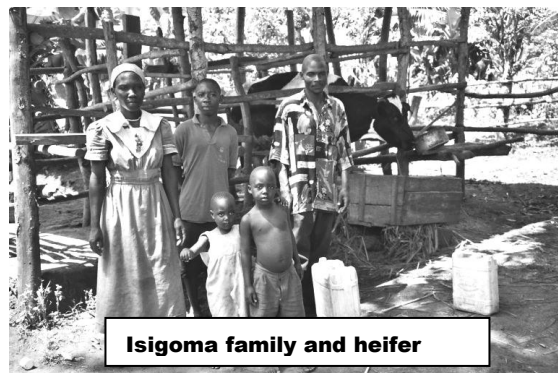
Supporting Development Partners

The core of our work is the support we are able to provide to our development partners. CWS is currently supporting 32 development programmes in 21 countries throughout the world. An example of these programmes is that of the Planning, Development and Rehabilitation Department (PDR) of the Church of Uganda which was established in 1974 and has been a partner of Christian World Service for many years. The programmes are available to all regardless of religion.

The PDR operates through dioceses and parishes across Uganda. Its work includes:

- 1) Grassroots development programmes: improved agricultural production, savings and credit schemes, land resource management.
- 2) Food and Nutritional programmes: Food processing, storage & marketing; rural water and sanitation; training community-based extension workers.
- 3) HIV and AIDS, Malaria and TB control programmes: Health support services, HIV and AIDS awareness & prevention programme; community support for those sick and orphaned by AIDS.
- 4) Peace and Human Rights Programme: Conflict prevention and peace building work, training development workers.
- 5) Uprooted Peoples programme: Emergency relief, rehabilitation & resettlement of the 1.6 million internally displaced people and refugees from neighbouring countries.

An example of the difference that the programme makes is that of Norbert Isingoma and his family who are participants in a heifer programme. They were given their heifer after



Norbert and his wife, Ruth, had completed a year of training in how to care for the heifer, utilise the manure, and use the milk to make cheese. The heifer has not only improved the nutrition for the family but the sale of the milk in excess of their requirements has enabled Norbert and his wife to meet their other cash needs, including the school costs of their five children, the oldest of whom is now at secondary school. Their proudest achievement is that they have been able to replace their house that was blown over and damaged in a storm with one built of more permanent materials.

Action by Churches Together – Development (ACT-D)

This global network of ecumenical development agencies is growing steadily and now has more than 70 members, the majority from developing countries. CWS is an enthusiastic support of the grouping as it provides opportunities for us to work and learn together. It is also, potentially, a very influential voice supporting good development practice and those international policies that are needed to eradicate poverty.

Emergency Appeals

Unfortunately humanitarian emergencies as a result of conflict or natural disasters are all too common and we have over the last year launched emergency appeals for: Zimbabwe; Cyclone Nagris in Burma; the earthquake in China, Darfur in Sudan and Typhoon Fengshen in the Philippines. The generous support given to these appeals has enabled Christian World Service to obtain Government funding for its emergency work.

Education, Campaigning and Advocacy

I encourage you in your advocacy for total debt cancellation for poor countries because, frankly, it is a scandal that we are forced to choose between basic health and education for our people and repaying historical debt. President Mkapa of Tanzania.

Global Youth Encounter

In many ways the highlight of this year has been the hosting of the Global Youth Encounter: Make Peace a Reality funded largely from the money donated by the churches to CCANZ for the Decade to Overcome Violence. Three weekend events were held at Te Maungarongo, Ohope, Wainuiomata and Christchurch as well as meetings around the country. Five international guests from Fiji, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste and local resource people helped young people from schools and churches learn about how they both live with conflict and seek to build a better future for everyone. There has been a strong response to this new initiative and CWS is exploring opportunities for further involvement with those who participated.

Debt

CWS continues to play a leading role in the Jubilee Aotearoa network meeting regularly with the government on its policies relating to debt, the World Bank, the IMF and Asian Development Bank. Of particular concern is the impact of rising food and oil prices after decades of economic policies often on their advice that have undermined local food security and sovereignty.

Fair Trade and Fair Trade Churches

New Zealanders' support for fair trade products as a practical demonstration of support for producers getting a fair return for their production continues to grow exponentially. More and more suppliers are offering fairtrade certified products, particularly tea, coffee and chocolate, and there are other goods in the offing including clothing, sugar, spices, vanilla and bananas. Much of the interest is driven by consumer demand and churches have played a significant role. Over two hundred parishes took part in this year's Fair Trade Fortnight, serving fair trade tea, coffee and hot chocolate after their services and 30 churches have signed up for the joint CWS/Trade Aid Fair Trade Church scheme. If your local shop does not stock a range of fair-trade products it is worthwhile asking them to, and if they do, thanking them.



Food crops damaged by salt water intrusion, Kiribati

New Campaign initiative: Climate Change

The impacts of climate change fall disproportionately on poor countries and poor communities, while it is rich countries who have had the benefits that have resulted in climate change. In early 2009 CWS will launch a major campaign around the social justice and development issue associated with climate change. CWS is particularly interested in providing an international perspective in support and collaboration with those working on local initiatives to address climate change.

0.7% Campaign

As reported last year the Government decision to increase overseas development assistance to 0.35% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2010/11 was a very significant step forward. It is however only half way towards the expected 0.7% by 2015 and there is still no announced timetable for achieving this higher figure. So we need to keep the pressure on.

Cluster Munitions Treaty

There has been much action over the last 18 months supporting the campaign to get an international treaty to ban the production and use of cluster munitions¹. A meeting hosted by the New Zealand Government in February this year paved the way for an historic treaty which was finalised in Dublin in May. The final step is to get enough nations to ratify it for it to come into force. The New Zealand Government needs encouraging to ensure that it ratifies the treaty before the signing on 3 December in Oslo.

Churches' Agency on International Issues

Over the last year this group which is supported by the Methodist and Anglican Churches, The Salvation Army and the Religious Society of Friends has produced two further *Hot Topics*. One *Palestine: 40 Years of occupation* looks at the situation in Palestine, the suffering imposed on the people there, and provides a voice for some of those – Muslims, Christians and Jews working for a peaceful resolution of the situation. The second *Immigration Matters* looks at refugees and asylum seekers. It concentrates on the New Zealand experience, and puts it in the international context. Each provides a very readable summary of the topic and can be read, or used as the basis for group study. Copies are available on request from cws@cws.org.nz

In preparation is a *Hot Topic* looking at weapons of war, particularly - land mines, depleted uranium and cluster munitions – and the efforts to have them banned. CAII is continuing to publish short web updates on the situation in Zimbabwe (see <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/topics>)

Thank You

In a world where international events and decisions have an immediate impact, it is important that New Zealand churches have an international ecumenical presence. A presence that contributes with other international ecumenical agencies and colleagues to overcoming poverty and injustice: by supporting development work; by adding to the Christian voice in international advocacy; and by campaigning, advocacy and education in New Zealand. With your support CWS provides that presence. It enables member churches to respond appropriately, effectively and efficiently to issues of justice and peace around the world. Thank you for the backing that the Methodist Church and Methodists throughout New Zealand have provided over the last 63 years, your continued support is vital to CWS's future work. A world without poverty is not only possible, but is in keeping with the grace of God for the world.

For more news about Christian World Service including news, worship resources and other materials visit our web site (www.cws.org.nz).

¹ Cluster munitions are bombs or shells that contain within them hundreds of smaller bombs. Not only do these munitions kill indiscriminately and pose a particularly serious threat to civilians; but more importantly, many of the smaller bombs do not explode on impact and lie hidden only to be detonated by civilians. www.stopclusterbombs.org.nz

Suggested Decisions:

1. That Conference thanks the Rev John Roberts for representing the Methodist Church on the Christian World Service Council and the Churches Agency on International Issues;
2. That Conference affirms the work of Christian World Service and encourages parishes to support the Christmas Appeal and emergency appeals.
3. That the Conference encourages all parishes to support the CWS campaign on climate change and its continued advocacy for policies to eradicate poverty.
4. That the Conference writes to the leaders of all political parties urging their support for an increase in aid spending to meet the 0.7% commitment, to help people out of poverty.
5. That Conference writes to the Hon Phil Goff, Minister of Disarmament, thanking him for his work on the Cluster Munitions Treaty and asking that the Government ratify the Treaty before December 3.

Jonathan Fletcher
National Director