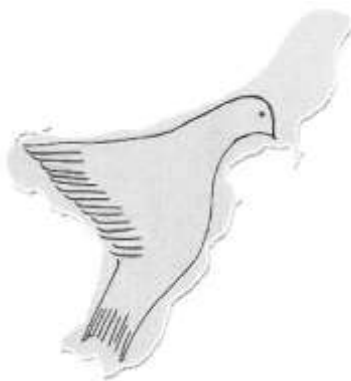


Methodist Conference 2010

Te Háhi Weteriana O Aotearoa

CONFERENCE SUMMARY



The annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand met in the Palmerston North Convention Centre from Saturday November 6 until Wednesday November 10.

WEEKEND

The first part of the Conference on Saturday and Sunday was a time of inspiration, including welcome, celebration, induction, farewell and ordination.

The Powhiri included the acknowledgement of those lay and ordained people who had died during the year, who had given significant leadership to the Connexion. Outgoing President and Vice-President, Alan Upson and Lana Lazarus, then hosted a liturgy and lunch for the family members of the deceased.

The induction of the President Desmond Cooper and Vice-President Sue Spindler, was a feast of music and colour with choirs and soloists adding to the sense of occasion and fittingly introducing the theme, "Tell out my Soul".

President Desmond in his address, which was based on the theme of the Magnificat - "Tell out my Soul", began by acknowledging the importance of feminism which had entered his consciousness as a young child through the influence of the "agony of Welsh Aunts" who raised him and which had continued through his time as the father of four daughters. He reminded the Conference that we were in danger of forgetting that in NZ we still have discrimination and violence against women.

The theme of praise echoing through Mary's Song is reflected for Des, by living with a deep sense of gratitude, "and he said that with Mary we are all called by God to be gracious, compassionate and peace loving".

He went on to share what he saw as the implications of following such a call, and named these as the Church's commitment to a Bi-Cultural Journey, concern for the poor, accepting God's unconditional love and living with a passion for Connexionalism.

Vice- President Sue Spindler went on to emphasise God's call to each individual person and the leap of faith we may have to take in responding. She then went on to speak, as had President Des, about the strong influence that her parents and her Church family had on her faith development.

Sue talked of her passion for and her involvement with children, youth and music and how this had strengthened her passion and commitment to the Methodist belief in "Every member a minister". She urged Conference members to remember that this refers not only to the ministry of adults, and spoke movingly of the weekly ministry of two young people (a young intellectually handicapped man and an eight year old girl), in her home congregation, who week by week, by their participation in worship and fellowship, minister to adults. For Sue the Methodist Bi-Cultural Journey is the way she sees Methodists striving to live out their commitment to peace, justice and antiracism.

Saturday evening was a time when the young people (aged from about three years to forty years) provided challenge, entertainment and lots of fun, helping Conference members realise that our Church is alive and well and the future is in good hands.

The Ordination Service on Sunday afternoon was attended by more than 600 people from all over New Zealand. Four probationers were ordained and received into Full Connexion, JooHong Kim, Hiueni Nuku, Ikilifi Pope, and Metuisela Tafuna. The ordination charge was preached by the Ex President and Ex Vice- President. They posed the question as to how we might build on the God given imperative adopted by the Church in the 1980's, to move beyond the Colonial form of being Church and enacting the gospel, to a Church making the Bi-Cultural prophetic direction a reality.

Conference also received into Full Connexion, Andrew Doubleday and Lynne Wall, being reinstated after a period away, Andrew Gammon, Paul Prestidge, Marilyn Welch, and Bertie Meyer from sister Churches.

Unveiling of plaque

Following the service, Conference gathered in the City Square to watch the unveiling of a plaque.

During Conference in 1988, which was the last time Conference was held in Palmerston North, the then President of Conference for that year, Mr Eric Laurensen, planted a Kowhai tree in the Square to mark this significant occasion. This happened at the conclusion of a parade of Conference around the Square at which parishes present for the event also paraded their parish banners.

This year the Conference processed from the Convention Centre to the Square, carrying the 1988 Conference banner depicting the Manawatu, the new Lower North Island Synod banner made for this year's Conference, as well as the Methodist Church Conference banner. When the processional arrived in the Square Jenny Olsson welcomed people to the site, explained the significance of the banners and asked Eric Laurensen to unveil a memorial plaque that reads "*This tree and plaque commemorates the gathering of the Methodist Conference in 1988 and 2010.*" This was blessed by the President Mr Desmond Cooper.

City Councillor Vaughan Dennison then addressed Conference members welcoming them to Palmerston North and in his remarks hoped that it would not be another 22 years before conference came back to Palmerston North.

MONDAY - WEDNESDAY

The theme of the morning devotions was: *'A Providence demanding other things of us'*, led by Jim Stuart. The devotions explored three themes: *'Wake up to the Quake'*, *'Look for the Cracks'*, and *'Follow the Light'*. Jim used the Christchurch earthquake as a metaphor for the impact of Methodism on England in the eighteenth century, using the insights of Xavier Le Pichon, the French geophysicist who first developed the concept of plate tectonics. Stuart emphasised how fluid the earth is and pointed out that the underlying principle is: change or die. Those systems that do not change, crack apart and die.

Earthquakes introduce change in order to maintain the earth as a living system. He argued that the same principle applies to the Church. For it to remain alive and vital, it needs to change in response to the challenges of the day, he encouraged the Methodist Church to respond creatively to the changes taking place in society.

Official Representatives from the Presbyterian, Anglican and Catholic Churches were welcomed on Monday morning and a representative from each Church brought greetings.

The General Secretary then presented Conference questions 1-24 for acceptance by Conference. These questions relate to the deployment of Presbyters, Deacons, Probationers, Candidates and Lay Ministers for the next Connexional year.

Council of Conference reported on its work for the year. Council brought to Conference the first major paper for discussion by the Conference. This was a proposal for a new model of Presidency for Te Haahi. This model would have seen President's holding office for two years instead of the current term of one year. A spirited debate showed that there was not a clear consensus amongst Conference members. The group who had prepared the paper were asked to go away and see if they could bring back a proposal that Conference could accept. The group brought back five resolutions which proposed that the Church retain the current President/Vice-President Team who would serve for two years. These resolutions were adopted by the Conference and the new model will commence in 2012.

Te Taha Maori are experiencing growth in numbers particularly amongst their Rangatahi. Taranaki Rohe hosted a very successful National Rangatahi Hui in Patea.

Te Taha Maori continues to stress the importance of Aotearoa being the context for doing theology and that being Maori is central to the ongoing development of Maori Theology.

The Methodist Women's Fellowship has just inducted its youngest ever National President, Mataiva Robertson of New Plymouth.

Wasewase Ko Viti Kei Rotuma E Niu Siladi Superintendent, Rev Peni Tikoinaka, thanked the PAC Distribution Group and the Church for the endowment grant of \$500,000 that has been received. This grant will enable the building of the Fijian work in New Zealand.

Mission Resourcing gave a lively presentation on the development of the **Kids Loving Church** programme which came about in response to a directive from the 2009 Conference that children's ministry was to be a priority. The implementation Task Group demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment for the work which is rapidly gathering

momentum. Conference agreed that all people working with children are to complete a Police vetting check by 2012.

Andrew Gammon spoke enthusiastically about the **Refresh Programme** which was begun by the late Andre Le Roux and which he is now continuing. His main focus is on the Ten Minutes on Tuesday available weekly on email. He will also be developing other resources for contemporary worship as well as being available to offer assistance and advice.

The Tauwi Youth Facilitator continues to build links with Synod Youth Workers and the benefit of this is being observed in a number of Synods who are experiencing growth in numbers at monthly youth services. Conference encourages the Youth to take more time to consider the formation of a Youth Council.

The **SeRVNT-HOOD** programme which is offered by Wanganui Social Services and Trinity Parish has proven to be a successful and life changing experience for young people. Three of the core aims that this programme continues to hold for its participants are to: challenge their current comfort zones and prejudices; explore what it means to be in servant leadership and ministries; and 'learn by doing and engaging' with people and places within a current NZ context.

The Diaconate Task Group are rejoicing in the acceptance of their first Deacon candidate since 1995. Two candidates will also commence training in 2011. For those who are passionate about this ministry this has been a breakthrough.

David Major, National Director of PCSANZ, gave an interesting and informative presentation on the work of Prison Chaplains and the Chaplaincy Board.

Methodist Mission Aotearoa spoke of "A warm heart" expressed through Social Justice, Liberation Theology and strength based programmes. Each Mission told human stories which spoke of the success of the work that was being undertaken.

Parishes were encouraged to promote Neighbours day 2011. This programme was initiated by Lifewise and is being promoted in other Mission regions.

The Board of Administration gave a presentation showing the devastation to Church buildings in the Christchurch area caused by the September 4 earthquake. Parishes were reminded of the wide range of insurance covers available to them through the Church Insurance fund including business interruption insurance.

The Board has during 2010 been focussing on a wide range of issues which are of concern to the Church in an endeavour to ensure that it is appropriately focused to give a lead to the Church.

The Faith and Order Committee report reported on Anglican Methodist conversations, national and international. Of particular interest is the progress made in Ireland where consideration is being given to a step toward the recognition of and interchangeability of ministries. Lay Superintendency of Synods sparked considerable debate and when Conference rose on Monday at 6pm, consensus had not yet been achieved. Frustration was also expressed at the lack of progress regarding mutual ministry with the Anglican Church.

The Committee is intending to revise the orders for Holy Communion and there was considerable debate around translation of these.

Governance Task Group

The second major paper considered by the Conference was the report of the Governance and Management Task Group. This group has been meeting since 2009 to develop a proposal acceptable to the Church. Conference passed resolutions relating to the further work to be done and asking Council of Conference to review the membership.

Mission and Ecumenical

Prince Devanandan and Diana Tana represented Te Haahi at the Christian Conference of Asia held 14-16 April 2010. Prince has been elected to the CCA General Committee and Diana was elected moderator of the Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth formation programme.

Conference affirmed the Charter of Compassion and commends it to the Church for serious discussion and implementation.

Prince Devanandan was named and endorsed by Conference as the secretary designate of Mission and ecumenical.

Conference affirmed its commitment to Christian World service and endorsed the food for life campaign asking Parishes to explore how they might support the Right to food.

Ex President/Ex Vice President

Alan Upson and Lana Lazarus shared at depth their experiences during the year. They had visited Churches through the whole country, attending celebrations and making pastoral visits. Alan attended the British Conference and Lana attended celebrations in Tonga and the Solomon Islands. They spoke of their intentional working together as a bi-cultural partnership. They then gave an audio visual presentation covering the whole year. Conference acknowledged them with acclamation.

Communications

Conference recognised the importance of Touchstone in the life of the Methodist Church and Co-operating Ventures. Paul Titus was congratulated on his silver award from APRA for a story on Fiji.

The Chairperson also reported that Touchstone is at last financially secure.

The Publishing Board is to undertake a review of the Church website.

President and Vice-President Elect

Conference received the names of the Rev John Roberts and Olive Amani Tanielu as President and Vice President Elect. John and Olive will be inducted at the 2011 Conference in Auckland.

Trinity College

The Council has been working on the development of a framework for staff so that they are able to get on with the task without constant reference to the Board. Keeping the Spirit Aflame is a balancing act within a strategic direction:

- History and Future.
- Foundations and Creativity.

- Leadership and Service.
- Limited Resources and Well-being.

Work has also been done on staff hours of work and study leave.

Licentiate in Ministry Studies (LIMS) is for the whole people of God. It's designed for people who want to participate in community and church life, through learning and thinking together, and developing a deeper spirituality. It's a special sort of educational connexion around both faith and service concepts, which is sometimes called diaconal ministry,

The Lay Preachers Network

Many Lay Preachers have received their 50 year service award

Dorothy Willis gave a presentation on the changes that have been made in lay preachers training since 1959. Three Facilitators and a support team of 12 resource over 300 members.

The annual meeting:

- Remembered those who had died.
- Agreed to prepare a database of all lay preachers.
- Make use of the resources provided through Trinity College.
- Talked about whether there should be a badge.
- Discussed succession for the Local Preacher Facilitation Team.

Public Questions

Conference affirmed the work of the newly established Public Questions network.

Resourcing parish and community to Social, Economic and environmental issues is a focus for the Network.

Particular areas of focus for this year will be:

Welfare Reform – a welfare system based on principles of social justice is the goal.

Environmental responsibility – to support principles of sustainability as expressed in the theologies of care of creation.

Development and Aid – a shared responsibility for directions for development of the ocean environment, challenges of poverty and climate change.

Parishes are urged to initiate and engage discussions on social issues.

Law Revision

The Law Revision Committee brought a number of resolutions making editorial changes to the Law Book. Many of these were changes to the Discipline Code which had been circulated to Synods for discussion throughout the year. The Legal Adviser thanked Synods and Parishes for the excellent comments and suggestions made. He acknowledged that these had been of great assistance to the Committee.

The Conference affirmed all the Presidential Rulings which had been made during the year.

Conference expressed its thanks to Geoff Peak who is retiring from the Committee after serving for many years as a member. For a long period he also served the Conference and Law Revision Committee as Legal adviser.

The Evangelical Network and Liberal Society enjoyed an evening of fellowship together on the Saturday evening of Conference.

Speakers:

Speaker - Peter Sharples

Peter Sharples addressed the Conference, giving very generously of his time and energy. He spoke on a wide range of issues ranging from the Foreshore and Seabed legislation, Constitutional Reform, involvement of the Maori Party and its place in the MMP environment, the need for alternative prison facilities for Maori which focussed on rehabilitation and the importance of retaining the uniqueness of Maori and particularly Te Reo.

Speaker - Sheikh Mohammed Amir, Imam of Wellington Islamic Centre

Sheikh Mohammed Amir commented early in his presentation “do not argue with People of the Book (Jews and Christians) except in the politest of terms”! Sheikh Mohammed Amir did this most graciously and offered us an exposition of Islam very compatible with much of Christianity.

He argued for an end to “suffocating bigotry” and for tolerance and justice for all. The essence of justice must be peace for all, for God, for people, for all creation. Sheikh Mohammed Amir extolled Jesus as a prophet of peace, a prophet of Islam as well as Christianity.

Speaker Rosemary McLeod

Journalist Rosemary McLeod engaged with the Conference sharing experiences of her own life story and her experiences as a journalist and talked about how this shaped the attitudes and values which she carries into her work. She spoke of her passion for justice and her frustration with the penal system. Conference received her warmly and thanked her for taking the time to speak so openly and at depth.

Wesley College

Wesley College Chairperson Rev John Murray, spoke about the requirement for Boards to be involved in curriculum design, noting the dichotomy between individual and collective responsibility.

The Principal advised:

- a. The Minister of Education has signed off the Supplementary Agreement to the 1986 Integration Agreement, approving the revised Special Character Clause approved by Conference 2009; and
- b. The recent positive Education Review Office experience that noted that students were proud of their school, confident and aspirational; and that teachers were hardworking.

Conference thanked Rev John Murray for his 15 years of service to the Wesley College Trust Board.

The Principal reflected on the effect of the aspiration of the Special Character Statement being left to the Wesley College Trust Board to implement.

While the Board is very appreciative of the support that continues to be offered by the Robert Gibson Trust and other Parishes, the Principal challenged other Trusts and Parishes to consider the Trusts and finds they administer and determine whether any such funds can be directed to support students at Wesley College.

Final Acts

Conference closed on Wednesday morning with an acknowledgement of the outstanding work done by staff and the arrangements Committee.

The Conference banner was passed to Vahefonua Tonga and Conference charged them with hosting the 2011 Conference in Auckland.

The final act of Conference was joining in the Covenant Service where each reporting group answered the question "What is God saying to us now?"

The summary of these presentations will be available on the **website** http://www.methodist.org.nz/conference/2010/conference_agenda

Go Forth and Tell Out Your Soul!