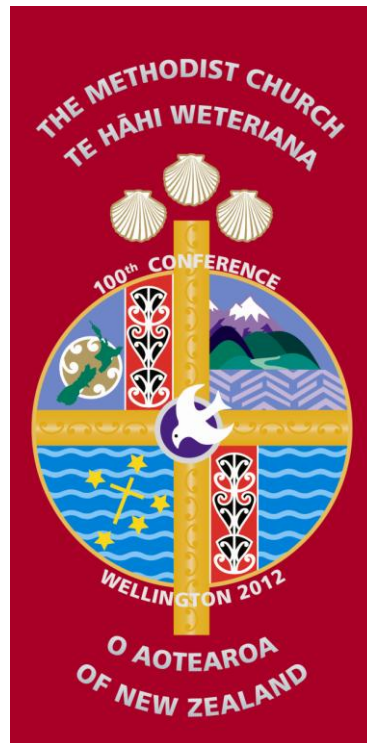


Methodist Conference 2012

Te Hāhi Weteriana O Aotearoa

CONFERENCE SUMMARY



The Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand met in Wellington at the Wesley Wellington Church from Saturday November 3 until Wednesday November 7.

Conference 2012: *an informal and eclectic summary to help you remember and report*

FRIDAY

Wesley Historical Society Dinner

We were welcomed by president Helen Laurenson, with devotions by Dr Elaine Bolitho. We remembered those members who had died: Mrs Lynnette Harpham, Mrs Margaret Gordon, Rev Judith Parkes, and Rev Loraine Reid.

John Roberts was thanked for his patronage of the society during the year and he and Olive were thanked for their time as President and Vice President of the church.

Officers elected unopposed.

Two new publications were presented. We received Stewart Collis' book on the history of the Stewardship Dept in the Methodist Church of New Zealand and Rev Dr Lynne Frith and Rev Dr Susan Thompson launched the book they edited: "A kind of Opening" - a tribute to Dame Phyllis Guthardt.

Following an excellent dinner, we were treated to a fascinating and erudite Annual Lecture by Rev. Donald Phillipps on the history surrounding the union of the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists in 1913. Don's lecture was received with warm appreciation.

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SATURDAY

Evangelical Network breakfast

As has been their practice for some years now, the Evangelical Network met for breakfast at the beginning of Conference to gather around and pray for the incoming president and vice-president of the church.

Powhiri at Pipitea Marae

On what surely must have been Wellington's bleakest and windiest, wettest and coldest spring days, Conference members fought their way from a cold car park to a warm welcome on the Pipitea Marae for a formal welcome and commencement of Conference.

After lunch Rev Rex Nathan and Ms Jan Tasker were inducted as President and Vice President respectively, at the beginning of what will be New Zealand Methodism's first two year presidential term. The service took place in the huge Wellington Anglican Cathedral, with perfect acoustics for choir and solo voices...

Following afternoon tea, we resumed our places to pay tribute to those retiring or moving on in various ways, honouring Alan Upson, Bill Peddie, Bruce McCallum, Desmond Cooper, Doris Elphick, Langi'ila Uasi, Nigel Hanscamp, Graeme White and David Smith for the various roles that they have played in service to the church.

Centennial Dinner at Pipitea Marae

Saturday evening we met again at Pipitea Marae for our centennial dinner, marking 100 years since Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists formally united in Wellington, in 1913. In marked contrast to our earlier visit to the marae, conference members sat around circular tables, ten to a table, with the Governor General of New Zealand Sir Jerry Mateparae. We were welcomed formally: with a formal welcome by a formal Governor General, and sat formally down to a formal meal: and then somehow the evening exploded. Aaah...I know why... the menu! *TO START Freshly baked breads and spreads ENTREE Sautéed Tiger prawns on a pickled fresh vegetable salad, citrus crème fraiche and slice of fresh lime OR Baked Cajun-spiced chicken breast served on a bed of tomato and red onion salsa with rocket and radicchio salad and plum vinaigrette: MAIN Roast beef sirloin served with marjoram infused duchesse potatoes accompanied by glazed seasonal vegetables, lavender jus and blue cheese butter OR Grilled salmon dusted with lemon-kelp pepper served with crushed minted peas accompanied by champagne risotto cakes & parsley cream sauce : DESSERT Apple and Rhubarb roulade with berry caulis, chocolate cup brimming with berry sauce, garnished with strawberries and chocolate garnish...*all served instantaneously by a small army of waitresses synchronised by a maitre-d' who cued it all with tiny nods...I felt as if I was in the finest of restaurants...

And then best somehow got even better. Reverend Napi Waaka, who had already entertained us with dreadful jokes (Holmes' tent.... aargh!) got up and introduced the Patea Maori Club...and

somehow persuaded a very gracious Governor General to remove his jacket and join in the songs and the actions...and the big grins on everyone's faces leaked over to everyone else's and a great wave of hilarity and aroha swept over the whole gathering. There'd have been at least two hundred people seated: and two hundred and ten of them were laughing 110% of the evening!

SUNDAY

Early on Sunday morning the jogger and cyclists in Wellington might have noticed a constant stream of red uniforms, for all the world like something out of an old movie, with hard white fezzes, fire-engine red coats and brass instruments. There was a general milling around, with tiny Tongan youngsters in immaculate suits, proud mothers, enthusiastic supports and a group of people carrying banners. A moment of organisation: a nod from the bandleader: and to the triumphant strains of "Onward Christian Soldiers": the band and the following crowd set about recreating the public march celebrating the union of two branches of Methodism into one. We swept all the pigeons before us, and attracted bleary-eyed observers as we marched proudly just ahead of two safety trucks, stopping all the traffic around us and sending band music up into the cavernous canyons of Wellington's high rise office blocks. The acoustics were amazing: the red uniforms spectacular: and for once at least, Conference was not an invisible and inaudible presence in the city...

Our Sunday morning service included a creative drama presentation from the students of Wesley College, calling us all to the new ten year project connexional theme of "Let the Children Live", followed by a speech from Metiria Turei, co-leader of the New Zealand Green Party, about the place of children in New Zealand Society.

Sunday afternoon we were back to the cathedral for the ordination of Ian Boddy, Alofaifo Asiata, Alisa Lasi, Ian Falkner and Mary Nicholas as presbyters and Megan Alley as deacon.

Evangelical Network and Liberal Society Dinner In between a very well catered meal the Liberals Society and the Evangelical Network shared a meal with Gemma Minogue playing on a guitar singing blues and soul as background to an enjoyable evening. Anna and Manu Ward and Gemma Minogue from Urban Mission communities told us a little of their stories and the processes by which they came to work out their Christian faith in Newtown Council flats, with a mixture of people living in community. The annual Conference Methodist Art Competition, with the Conference theme of "The Church Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" was won by Grant Stephens of Beckenham Methodist with his installation containing three folders suggesting visions of the church from a young adults perspective.

MONDAY

Opening of conference devotions: Why is the past important for us today? Terry Wall and Norman Brooks and Susan Thompson reminded us of how history affects us.

We received greetings from the World Council of Churches brought to us by Rev Dr Dong Sung Kim.

Youth Ministries made a presentation which is on your conference CD

Te Taha Maori and Tauwi met together in caucus and we heard of the work of Te Taha Maori. One little detail I shall remember from their report for some time was the discussion about the appropriate garb for minita a iwi. Those affected considered robes...academic gowns..and finally settled on distinctive and practical green stoles. We honoured the appointment of three new Minita-a-Iwi: Lana Lazarus, Bella Ngaha and Keita Hotere.

Dr Russell Wills, Children's Commissioner, presented a compelling survey of the state of the nation's children, with the bold statement that solutions to child poverty and therefore health, education and life histories with hope were achievable...for notes from his address see your conference CD or go online to www.occ.org.nz.

Mission and Ecumenical presented a report that included some wonderful accounts of work being done by MCNZ in the Solomon Islands, followed by reports from UCANZ, from Filo and his visit to Crete as a WCC steward, and a report from CWS.

Mission Resourcing reporting included a report from newly ordained deacon Megan Alley, and a presentation from the CEO of Prison Chaplaincy Service of Aotearoa New Zealand, Rev Maku Poutae. Conference was informed of the results of the four plus four interviewing committee and that Rev Dr Trevor Hoggard had been appointed to the position of director of Mission Resourcing position vacated by the resignation of Rev Nigel Hanscamp.

Esmé Cole presented a report on children's ministries, and issued the challenge of how we were to continue and expand this work in the light of our commitment to the ten year "Let the Children Live" focus.

TUESDAY

We began Tuesday with the theme *God of the Present*, presented by Te Taha Maori, and a beautiful waiata *Ko te Aroha ano he wai*, making the link between water and our feelings for each other and our planet.

Trinity College then presented their report, with new initiatives bubbling out of the enthusiasm of Principal Dr David Bell. We were shown examples of the new courses running: "night school" offered at 99c for the first 20 people, on topics such as Great Minds from different contexts. We heard from a second year maths student discovering theology for the first time, from Keita discovering Hebrew on line, and hear to our amazement that the Trinity College website has up to 30,000 hits a month at its peak. We also hear that 70% of the current students entering Trinity already have existing theological qualifications, and of some of the plans and dreams for the future ahead.

Wesley College report opened with principal Ian Faulkner saying that anyone wanting a slow unthreatening retirement job need not apply for chaplaincy at Wesley: the position calls for robust engagement with energetically involved and hurting young people. We were informed that Wesley College will have been in existence for 170 years in 2014.

The Youth Report outlined a new mission statement and vision, and Conference decided after a little debate to set aside 2013 as Year of Youth and Young Adults and to ask each synod to fund at least one youth representative to Conference each year.

Connexional Mission Priorities Conference proceeded to establish a process for using existing bodies to further projects, missions or services.

Korean Methodists in New Zealand 11 pastors from the 14 Korean Methodist congregations in New Zealand sang to us, and were introduced by their superintendent Rev David Ahn. We were reminded that it was this group who supported Solomon Island work and Christchurch earthquake victims so generously.

Public Questions presented their report, which included a presentation.

Dr Barbara Peddie reminded us that questions of bio-ethics will touch us all eventually, and from Rev Bruce Anderson called us to support, after the example of British Methodist Church, a living wage as opposed to a minimum wage.

Our gay, lesbian and transgender Methodist presbyters and supporters offered their annual rainbow communion service over the lunch period.

Sinoti Samoa. Mrs Mataiva Robertson and Sivana Mulmulheata presented reports upon initiatives from Sinoti Samoa to prevent family violence and address social issues in their communities.

The Board of Administration presented its report, including reports from Paul Titus and Touchstone, and a report from Greg Wright on the decisions that have been made about insurance and managing of church resources over a very difficult time for the church following upon the Christchurch earthquake.

Conference thanked Rev Desmond Cooper and Sue Spindler for their terms as presidential team.

Faith and Order honoured Rev Dr Terry Wall's seventeen year stint chairing the committee, and notified us of Rev David Poultney's appointment as his replacement.

We thanked Rev Nigel Hanscamp for his seven years as Mission Resource Director and Taiwi Executive Officer.

WEDNESDAY MORNING

The church for the future Our Methodist Youth, under the capable and light hand of Filo Tu, brought us a drama about growing seeds and opened up extempore prayer for our future...

Methodist Mission Aotearoa began their report with Paula Taumoepeau presented a TED clip suggesting that there are very different ways of seeing the world, and Valetu Finau gave us an exciting glimpse of what is happening around Tongan social services. See www.laulotaha.org.nz

Rev Dr Terry Wall introduced Bishop Richard Randerson to inform Conference about the Marsden Cross project. See www.gospel2014.org for plans for a building and a bicentennial event for 2014

Law Revisions presented their report

Unfinished business: Conference discussed the issue of whether stand-alone lay superintendency was a possible model for Methodist synods in te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa. Tumuaki Dianna asked Tau iwi whether they had consensus agreement about this. At the time of writing (midday Wednesday) it appeared that this was being sent back to synods for further discussion.

Quotable quotes along the way

“It’s necessary to lift the words from the paper” - *Rev Tony Franklin*

“Are we just barking dogs...or are we going to bite?” - *Rev Peni Tikoinaka*

“Churches don’t grow...people do” - *Rev Nigel Hanscamp*

“It’s not a relay race with changing participants...it’s a three-legged race: not equality but equity...”
- *Rev Peter Mackenzie, on co-operating parish life*

“Let’s spend money now to prevent problems in the future” *Dr Russell Wills*

“On Sunday mornings in South Auckland, there are more Methodists in church than any other denomination.”

Disclaimer: *It is not possible to include all the people or events that made up conference in a format produced as quickly as this was...if I’ve over-emphasised some bits and forgotten you or yours, please don’t take it personally! The formal report, on the church website soon, will be what is read into the history books..this is just to help you now!*

Rev Alan K Webster

7th Nov 2012