


Nau mai rā, Talofa lava, Mālō e lelei, Bula Vinaka and Welcome!

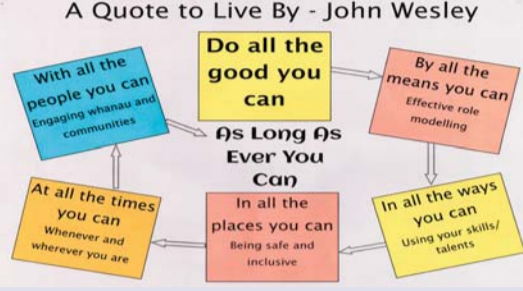
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Nurturing talent




Doing church in crisis

A Quote to Live By - John Wesley



Presbyterian archives online



Dominion Tongan Methodist Church - we got your back!



“COVID-19 calls for every part of society to stand up and fight.”

Reverend Setaita

Methodist Church of NZ, Community Leader

#wegotyourbacknz

“We’re doing our part... we got your back”



Ministry for Pacific Peoples – ‘We got your back Aotearoa’ programme.

Trudy Downes

Since lockdown in March the Government has talked with church and other community leaders to gain a sense of what is wanted, what is needed and what might be sensible. The Ministry of Health (MoH) hosted the meetings which the Prime Minister and Dr Ashley Bloomfield frequently attended, along with representatives from other ministries working with Covid-19.

President Setaita has been impressed with the Government’s willingness to work with the people, citing an example during the first lockdown when the Prime Minister called a meeting with all Church leaders to discuss moving from Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2.

“I had a different view from other church leaders, of the Methodist Church of New Zealand being careful and not in a rush

to return to in-person services. The Prime Minister had to leave that Zoom meeting and attend to other duties, but she came back to hear more and to ask questions. Most churches wanted 100 people at gatherings, the Prime Minister chose 50. So the government does work with and listen to the people when they make their decisions.”

On Tuesday 11 August the Government announced a case of Covid-19 community transmission in Auckland. The decision was made for Auckland to move to Alert Level 3 from 12 noon on Wednesday 12 August and the rest of the country would be at Alert Level 2. Since then Zoom meetings with church and community leaders have been held daily.

Contact tracing effective

As part of the contact tracing process of the first known case, Americold closed its Auckland warehouse on 11 August,

sending staff into self isolation and for testing. A second worker received positive test results two days later on Thursday 13 August. That Americold employee was a member of Makamoūi, the Dominion Tongan Methodist Church. He informed the congregation leaders on Friday 14 August.

Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa leadership stepped up immediately to take charge. By Saturday morning they had developed a plan and had started informing the congregation of the situation regarding testing and self isolation.

With all the focus on keeping Covid-19 away and enjoying the freedoms that we returned to at Alert Level 1, the return of the virus via community transmission was devastating. Vahefonua had been exceptionally staunch in looking after its members and only returned to in-person services on 30 July 2020. Sunday 9 August

was their second in-person service since March 2020. The Covid-affected church member attended this service just prior to the positive test result.

Crisis management

Managing the situation wasn’t easy and there were issues in the communication process.

Firstly, the MoH did not contact the congregation as they classified the church service as ‘low risk’ given that the person affected likely became positive after 9 August. The person made first contact with the congregation leaders who then followed up with MoH.

The MoH risk rating meant that the congregation was unable to get a pop-up testing station at the church. ‘The fonof’, another health organisation, was able to organise testing for the close family, but not the congregation.

Congregation members who wanted to be tested had to join the five hour queues at the public testing stations. After five days some still didn’t have their test results. At the time of writing, of the 67 families that have been tested, 40 are negative. 27 families are still awaiting their results.

The MoH have not issued instructions with regards to building cleaning. This is not an issue at Alert Level 3 as no-one should be using the buildings, but it does make it harder for the leadership team to decide on the best steps forward to give everybody assurance that the building is safe and to decide how to work with other building users through this time.

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Key learnings

Some key learnings have been reinforced to the congregation.

1. Contact tracing is essential, for the church and for the congregation members.

Fortunately the service on Sunday 9 August was being live-streamed to all of Vahefonua and this recording provided the means of knowing who was present.

The leadership team will be following up on everyone having either the NZ tracer App, or another form of personal contact tracing. All Vahefonua buildings will have a QR code poster on display for people to use.

2. Having a communications strategy is imperative.

Of the 17 points on the Vahefonua Response and Resilience Plan, 10 focus on

communication. Etuini Talakai, Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Synod Secretary and congregation member says, "The Dominion Tongan Methodist Church was very proactive at the first lockdown in ensuring that our congregation contact list was up to date. This was good when we had to contact everyone to tell them to carefully self-isolate and get a Covid-19 test."

"We have been careful to protect the privacy and wellbeing of the affected man and his family. We are in regular phone contact; President Setaita talks and prays with him and his family regularly. We have asked that photos and references to the family be withheld from Facebook and other forms of publication."

"We have discovered that we need a communications team within each congregation to

manage the Facebook pages and our other communication channels. This will ensure that information is accurate and can be taken as the truth, rather than having our members follow conspiracy theories."

3. Hand sanitiser stations are needed at every door.

Etuini laughs as he says, "People always use doors you didn't plan for them to use. We need more sanitising stations!"

Moving forward

Key to working with government is recognising that this journey is a first for the government as well. They are putting in the effort to connect at all levels with each person, and as holes in the plan are discovered, they are being plugged.

On Saturday 15 August, Zoom advisory meetings restarted. The first was a forum of hundreds

including the Prime Minister, Dr Ashley Bloomfield, the Assoc Minister of Health, most cabinet ministers, church leaders, school principals and boards of trustees. As a result of that forum, the Ministry of Pacific Peoples is hosting regular Zoom meetings in several languages to allow the many Pasifika peoples a better chance of having their say and representing their communities. President Setaita and Vahefonua have been involved in these meetings, providing feedback on the issues that their congregation has encountered. President Setaita highlights that Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, as an arm of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, works towards the whole wellness of people, not just their spiritual life. "We want to see people thriving mentally, spiritually and physically. This involves being

active in working with government through Siaola, the Vahefonua Tonga Methodist Mission."

Etuini adds, "Our communication strategy was solid at the beginning of the first lockdown, and this is helping us now as families go through the communications team to Siaola and through 'the fonu' to other providers for utilities and food parcels.

"Our people can be too shy to ask for help. From the last lockdown we agreed and proposed to the church that we would give each family \$500. Some of the other congregations also did similarly. We had in mind that the families always give to the church and now we can help them in this situation." Siaola and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa are leading and helping our people through a difficult time, creating a path for others to follow should the need arise.

100 years a Christian

Rosalie Sugrue

On Sunday 16 August Kath Turkington of Kapiti Uniting Parish turned 100. Despite Covid-19 restrictions, members of the church congregation were able to share the occasion.

Kath was born in England and emigrated to New Zealand with her family as a young child. Her entire life has been Christ-centred and she has served different local churches in many roles. Music has been her longest contribution; as a nine-year-old she started playing the piano at Sunday school and at the age of 97 stopped playing the organ at Pukerua Bay and Paekakariki churches, when she decided to give up driving.

Kath held office as President of the Wellington District MWF and was later given the honour of Wellington district 'life member'. She served on the National Executive of MWF and also on the Local Arrangements

Committee for a Convention in Otaki.

Kath attends Kapiti Uniting Church on Sundays and is a loyal member of Raumati's Afternoon Women's Fellowship. Kath was delighted to receive a recent visit from NZMWF President Siniva Vaitohi and two of her Executive. Kath presented them with a copy of her life story in a book she has written for family members. The preface pays tribute to her family and many friends and includes these words: "I've enjoyed a good and happy long life full of the knowledge of a loving Heavenly Father."

The weekend before her birthday, Kath joined around 70 members of her family for a live-in celebration at the El Rancho Christian camp site in Waikanae. Among the many tributes was a rousing haka that brought tears to her eyes, and the Queen's letter beautifully famed by her son.

Kath lives independently in a serviced apartment in Paraparaumu. Metlifecare was intending to put on a birthday bash on the afternoon of her birthday, but



Centenarian Kath Turkington holds a copy of a letter she received from the Queen on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

Covid-19 restrictions in care facilities made this impossible. The Raumati Church congregation were allowed to meet with Kath in the foyer, presenting flowers, cake and tributes.



Two of the Male Room gardeners, Joe Galadamu (left) and Rev Paul Tregurtha (right).

Nelson parish outreach Male Room

Brian Kendrick

About two years ago, the congregation of St John's in the City, Nelson, joined with Stoke/Richmond Methodist to become the Nelson Tasman Methodist Parish (NTMP).

At the time, both congregations anticipated an injection of new energy and resources even though most parishioners are well into retirement age. New energy has been discovered in the uniting and a community outreach team has been formed. The team has established a relationship with Male

Room, an organisation that provides services to assist men living rough, or experiencing financial hard times, relationship breakdowns or other problems. Director Philip Chapman says, "Most of these guys have never known love."

During lockdown, the Male Room was active with Housing First in Nelson in ensuring that all of Nelson's homeless were accommodated. Some have since chosen to return to the 'outdoors'. For those living rough, managing winter cold is a problem so the NTMP, through their community outreach team, appealed for beanies, warm socks,

jerseys, winter clothes and hot water bottles.

In addition, a small team prepared a small plot of land outside Male Room's building and planted silver beet for their clients.

The outreach team is planning to donate small kits of toiletries for Male Room service users and fundraising is proposed through a soup-and-buns lunch at Church.

Philip Chapman, Male Room director and founder is delighted with the new relationship with Nelson Tasman Methodist Parish.