

Methodist Conference 2014

Te Háhi Weteriana O Aotearoa

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

- A time to sow, a time to grow -



The Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand met in Hamilton at Wintec from Saturday 15 November until Wednesday 19 November 2014

The intention of this record is to provide Conference delegates with summary material to report back to their congregations. This needs to be read in conjunction with the Conference sheets, where full lists of people involved, roles, and appointments will be found. That material and the formal record of decisions and minutes taken by Conference secretaries takes precedence over these more informal notes, for historical and legal purposes!

Rev Alan K Webster: Media Officer Conference 2014

Full proceedings and formal records of conference decisions are available on the Methodist website, <http://www.methodist.org.nz/conference/2014>

Formal guests of Conference included:

Rev Dr Finau Ahio, President Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
Rev Aisoli Tapa Iuli, President of the Methodist Church of Samoa
Rev Epineri Vakadewavosa, General Secretary Elect, Methodist Church of Fiji
Rev Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Waikato
Natasha Klukach, World Council of Churches Programme Executive for Church Relations

Observers from Other Churches

Margaret Whiting, Presbyterian Church
Deacon Peter Richardson, Roman Catholic Church

FRIDAY

Stationing Committee met.

Wesley Historical Society met for their AGM, where Helen Laurenson was re-elected as President, and we enjoyed a presentation from Rev Dr Allan Davidson on the Methodist Church and World War One.

SATURDAY

Service to honour those who have died

Induction of President Rev Tovia Aumua and Vice President Dr Arapera Ngaha.

Those retiring

Ken Olsen drew all the retirees up onstage, and sat them one at a time in leather armchairs like a talk-show host environment. He proceeded to ask each of them questions drawn from their tributes to provide us all with an extended glimpse into their varied lives and ministries. He provided a warm and almost intimate setting for us to honour these people for who they are and what they have done. Full formal tributes are printed in the Conference notes.

Rev Nigel Hanscamp also farewelled Conference, as he confirms his formal appointment with the Uniting Churches of Australia.

Conference Dinner hosted by Filo Tu, with addresses from Rev Donald Phillipps and Tumuaki Diana Tana on the occasion marking thirty years of the Methodist Church of New Zealand's bicultural journey. We were honoured with the presence of the Maori King, Tuheitia Paki.

SUNDAY

Tauwi : Introducing Michael Lemanu

“The local church is the hope of the world” and “If you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it”

-Andre LeRoux

- Young people have huge potential...there's a generation hungering after a relationship with God.
- What are we doing to enable our young people to find a relationship with Jesus?
- Are we prepared to do what it takes for our children alongside their elders in leading the church forward?

(Tauwi pages B (ii) 1-15)

Recruitment

Alan Webster asked Tauwi to consider what it is we are proud of in Methodism, and how we shared our faith. He asked that people who were interested in helping resource people for faith sharing with their neighbours contact him at either:

a.k.w@paradise.net.nz

or

P O Box 12-227 Christchurch 8242

What we can stop doing to enable us to do more ?

- Trevor Hoggard offered some suggestions of radical changes...not all changes suggested in the report are intended for ultimate action!
- He posed the important question: "Do we simply have to accept that around us the commercial world can make radical changes, do we have the ethos and ability to take resources from one person and give them to someone else?" There will be changes that involve people finishing jobs, changing positions..this will always be difficult.

Human sexuality issues

We have not yet answered the question from 2005 from Te Taha Maori: a representative discussion panel has been given a \$6,000 PAC grant to come up with a way forward.

Marital status question

There is a diversity of views: a working group to come with a way forward to be presented at next year's Conference.

Lay Preachers

There are suggestions that lay preacher courses be run as part of Trinity College: discussions ensuing at lunchtime for a later report.

Appointments of lay ministries

We are advised by our legal team that lay ministry appointments will need an employment contract: there will need to be work done to enable particular church requirements to operate.

Synod Reports highlights

- Wasease will leave off the words "in New Zealand" in its official title.

General Secretary

- David Bush talked about the qualities that are in smaller churches. It's not about the size: it's about energy and vision.
- Peter Williamson asked about the economies of Conference venues. David acknowledged the difficulties and outlines some of the problems: cheaper venues cost more to get to.

Supplementary papers

- Memorial No 6 from the Auckland and Manukau ..as not all Auckland synods have had a chance to discuss No 6, that this "be left on the table".
- Memorial No 7: that Conference manages a proposed Trevor and Gloria Shepherd Memorial Trust Fund under the General Purposes Fund: purpose "to enable training of ministers from the Solomon Islands" . The Shepherd family is about to make capital contribution: further contributions are invited. Preparation and training for ministry changes: this also provides future flexibility if required.

Ordination Service

A record number of ordinands came into presbyteral and diaconal ministries, ushered in by musical items and choirs of ever increasing enthusiasm and worship: culminating in the combination Tongan choirs into a glorious Te Deum. It was an inspiring and encouraging event. (The list of ordinands is in the Conference handbook).

EN and Liberal Society Dinner

We were hosted in and by our Methodist Tamihere Retirement Complex, with Dave McGeorge telling us about the history and the philosophy behind this hugely successful venture: and were

entertained by Rev Iremia Amituana'i's nine male singers from Bainbridge Methodist, Rotorua, ranging in age from 14 to 71 and hailing from all over the Southern Hemisphere...as well as being treated to a magnificent meal.

GLAM dinner A diverse cross section of 26 Conference attendees and friends attended a fabulous meal and enthusiastic socialising at the 24th GLAM dinner at Victoria Street Bistro. Hosted by local GLAMOROUS people – Rev Dr Susan Thompson and Nan Russell - the annual dinner continues to grow in popularity from year to year.

MONDAY

Rev Joohong Kim, Conference Chaplain, led us in morning devotions.

We stood to affirm the stationing sheet.

We affirmed the work of Council of Conference (sheet 4: Q 25).

We met in our chosen Business Meeting venues to discuss reports from various boards and committees.

Te Taha Maori report was received.

(B1 sheet #5)

Tau-iwi Report:

- Methodist Women's Fellowship report received B (iii) 13
- Evangelical Network report received B (iii) 12
- New Zealand Lay Preachers Association report received B (ii) 2
- Human Sexuality in Leadership: Working group B (ii) 1 set up for reporting to March synod.

Mission and Ecumenical:

- Tumuaki Rev Diana Tana addressed Conference and reported upon her visit to the World Council of Churches meeting in Busan, Korea.
- Filo Tu did a good job as Chief Steward at the World Council assembly...as a result of a good job well done, he has been appointed Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of Aotearoa.
- Prince reported on his visit to the Solomons, and showed us the results of our fundraising and contributions: the waterpipes and pumps, structures and plans for water supplies.(Read the full Conference report to get an idea of just how hair-raising travel is sometimes for Prince, and how he spends his time...! Keep him in your prayers...it's a little different from how many presbyters do pastoral work...!)
- At Sasamunga materials have just been unloaded for much needed construction work...they are back on target for work planned.
- The new project is solar panels for the Tabaka Training Centre in 2015...440 boys and girls technical studies, repairing motors, diesel maintenance and so on. Electrical and plumbing training.
- Planned are projects to give women and girls equal opportunities for employment.
- Dreams are for solar panels to extend working hours.
- Prince announced their new theme for the coming year as "Light and Life for the World"
- And with the contributions of the love-gifts given by Sinoti to leaders of Conference given to Mission and Ecumenical for solar panels the project was launched. Thank you, Conference!
- Michael Lemanu and Ameila Takataka reported on their visit to Cambodia for a two week training event with Youth in Asia Training for Christian Amity (YATRA). It sounded like an instructive and enthusiastic time for them both...

- We received a report from Pauline McKay of CWS thanking the church for its generous and loving support over this last year. CWS has 20 partners in 30 countries, with income growing by 32%. We were updated on the Syrian humanitarian crisis, the Ebola plague, and other major world problems. She shared a transformational agenda, outlining a way forward for hope..

We were then blown away by a glorious presentation from the Korean Methodist Churches in New Zealand, honouring increasing links with that sister Conference

Trinity College

- Retiring Principal David Bell introduced the new principal Dr Nasili Vaka'uta.
- We were given a glimpse of how the internet has affected education, and in particular theological education, with computer literacy increasingly a vital tool for both providers and users of the huge resources that the internet has made available globally.

Wesley College

- The Wesley College Trust Board spoke to the development plans for the current site at Wesley College: with possible plans to become a new community with housing, shopping and urban development, with the College being re-sited altogether. (E-31)
- We farewelled Sylvia Akauola Tongotongo after 9 years as Chaplain.
- and thanked Rev Ian Falkner for his service as Principal.

Bryan Bruce presented provocative excerpts from his documentary film-making examining the effects of neo-liberal economics in New Zealand, with some pertinent reflections on the failure of trickle-down benefits to the poor, the necessary re-framing of basic questions like "What is an economy for?...surely it is for the greatest benefit of the greatest number of people..." The evening concluded with a \$2 offering from all delegates...a gift of \$784.90 was taken up for the Breakfast Club at Russell St School in Porirua..

TUESDAY

We began the day with Sinoti Samoa: an enthusiastic and energetic youth worship, followed by a thought-provoking address from Utumau'u Pupulu (and the Lorax!).

Methodist Mission Aotearoa

(Section G in conference agenda)

Michael Greer reminded Conference of our call to do justice, live humbly and walk with our God..."theology in the saddle"

We received reports from:

Southern

- Talking about running a child-care option alongside gardening and cooking classes so that parents can be free to learn how to manage

Christchurch

- Explaining what it means to be the problems of being a landlord in low-income housing
- Outlining ways in which Christchurch congregations have been able to connect with their communities
- Talking about housing issues in Christchurch

Wellington

- David Hanna reported on things that are lost: like parenting skills, that are being re-taught to change the future of vulnerable people on the margins
- The challenge of a baby born in aging household to a mother addicted to methamphetamines

- We were challenged with the questions: what would our community look like and sound like if it were “child-rich” ? and what could our parishes contribute to make them “rich” places for children?

Auckland

- A new Matantikolo housing project, 22 houses for over 100 people built in Mangere, with an ongoing partnership between the Mangere Tongan Parish and the Airedale Property Trust
- John Murray provided glimpses of Life-wise ministry at work in the community like child-care, prison
- Conference thanked Michael Greer for many years of service

Board of Administration

(Section D in conference agenda)

Robert Gibson Memorial Trust

- The trust will be Building a new cowshed ☺

Wesley Historical Society

- 1941-1999 printed material has been scanned online, with some 133 publications on line. See the Methodist Website in PDF and other formats
- Alec Utting happy to put local church histories up on line

Connexional Property Report

(D12-17)

- Approval for property work which does not require building or resource consent up to \$10,000 does not require separate approval from the connexional property committee: that figure has been raised to \$20,000 in the light of inflation
- David Hunt introduced the Auckland memorial (No 3) requesting churches be able to come under local authority requirements for earthquake strengthening standards as opposed to the much higher requirements adopted by the Methodist Church of New Zealand following the Christchurch earthquakes.
- Greg Wright explained and expanded on his report...and pointed out that, contrary to popular understanding, Auckland is not earthquake risk-free. (“We have one opportunity of strengthening for an earthquake: and that is before the earthquake happens.”)

Address from Ex-Presidential team

- Rex and Jan reported on their last two years.
- Filo gave us a quick quiz on greetings in different languages, from places that turned out to be where the presidential team had travelled to.
- and Rex and Jan showed us pictures of their wide travels.

Mission Resourcing

Report E18-21

- **Fresh Expressions**..changing church in a changing world..church for people who are not yet members of a church...Training programmes are offered, and the hope is that this will be a resource for Methodist lay people and ordained
- **Tauiwi Young People and Families Ministries** Introducing Michael Lemanu to Conference...Let the Children Live focus...Kids Loving Church and TYTANZ (Tauiwi Youth Together Aotearoa New Zealand) enabled and strengthened throughout NZ
- **Pasifika Director** Aso Samoa updated us on the position of the Pasifika MR Director: this will become a half-time position until a new appointment is made
- Lay Ministry Support Val Nicholls updated us with the status of Local Shared Ministry support. They realise that there is the need for more support for lay people in ministry, especially those in rural and outlying areas. The focus will now shift towards bringing ministry locally, as opposed to running events to bring people to.

- **Refresh Ministries**...Andrew Gamman reported upon the work he has done with Ten Minutes on a Tuesday. He also offered four ideas in the stream of Refresh Ministries
 1. Think about ways to communicate in images rather than words
 2. Encourage participation...discovery exercises rather than monologues
 3. Create community..listen to people...priority to group rather than clergy
 4. Expect people to experience God...encounter rather than programme

We note with regret the end of this valuable ministry.

- **Tertiary Chaplaincy** Gratitude for bringing chaplains together for annual gathering for training and encouragement (E25 in report)

Faith and Order

(F1-9)

- David Poultney reflected upon their work of preparing lectionary responses, responses, appropriate orders of services and so on.
- He drew our attention to a coming project celebrating people whose stories will inspire us, a “calendar of saints” to encourage the church.

Public Questions

(Section J in Conference agenda)

- The Interchurch Bio-ethics Council offers a workshop helping people make choices lasting for a day or a half-day, as a roadshow that is available to come to you: contact interchurchbioethics.org.nz to find out when and if a roadshow is happening nearby or speak directly to Barbara Peddie.
- Betsan Martin reported on work some in areas of climate change, resource management and other social issues.
- Paul Barber addressed us on the issue of Inequality: some of the social issues facing New Zealand at the moment include income disparities, Housing WOFs, food in schools, the Living Wage, Time Banking, Micro-financing and the pending rewrite of the Social Securities Act. See clostertogther.org for more details.
- Global warming and a response from the Methodist Church: Lani Teofilo spoke from her experience with the WCC Ecology, Theology and Justice workshop that she attended.

Rev Dr Finau Ahio president Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga brought greetings, and gifted fine mats and other gifts.

Rev Aisoli Tapa Iuli president of the Methodist Church of Samoa addressed the gathering and gifted several wonderful fine tapa mats, a carved kava bowl, a magnificent ceremonial staff, a valuable red shell necklace, a swish,

Rev Dr Epinieri Vakadewavosa, General Secretary elect, Methodist Church of Fiji brought greetings to us, presenting gifts as well.

Opeta Amani addressed the Conference with a clip from a National Geographic photographer suggesting that there is more than one right answer to a problem: and that changing your perspective gave you a new point of view...he invited us to discuss what it was that put people in vulnerable positions in the context of suicide prevention, and what we might do to change that in relationship..

And we closed the day with an energetic Paulo Ieli and young people from Papatoetoe.

WEDNESDAY

Te Taha Maori led us in devotions, highlighting several faces and stories of those who have shaped our understanding of what it means to be Methodist

Publications Board

- **Methodist Web page** www.methodist.org.nz explained by Alec Utting.
- We were reminded about the importance of keeping everything up to date on Parish web pages.
- Touchtone Editor Paul Titus identified our newspaper as a kete, carrying the material that is of value to our community.
- We were reminded by the Media and Communications Fund that making applications for even as small a sum as \$200 will be received...Communications do have a maximum of \$5,000 per parish.

Elders

- Expressed some concern that there might not be enough time to deal with the discussion of insurance/strengthening issues.
- Commended the friendliness of Conference this year.

Law revision

- After considerable discussion, section 2 Ministry was referred back to law Revision for further work.

Unfinished Business

was dealt with...☺

General Secretary's report

- An "e -bike" (electric mountain bike) exists that will increase a 10km per hour effort going up a hill to enable 20km progress...but if you don't put in effort and turn the pedals, nothing happens...This compares with the work of the Spirit in the church... the Spirit works with us
- Superintendent changes were noted.

The Conference banner was handed over to Marlborough West Coast for next year in Blenheim.

The President and Vice-President thanked everybody.

Conference closed with a covenant service

**NEXT YEAR IN BLENHEIM!
14 – 18 November 2015**