

Methodist Conference 2016

Te Hāhi Weteriana O Aotearoa

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

~Moored to Christ, Moving into Mission~



The Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand met at Wesley College in Paerata, Auckland from Saturday 1 October until Wednesday 5 October 2016

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!

Full proceedings and formal records of conference are available on the Methodist website, <http://www.methodist.org.nz/conference/2016>

Overseas Guests of Conference included:

Rev Tevita Banivanua, President, Methodist Church in Fiji
Rev Colleen Geyer, General Secretary, Uniting Church in Australia
Rev Prof. Robert Gribbon, Official Representative, Uniting Church in Australia
Rev Sandy Boyce (Deacon), Presidnet DIAKONIA World Federation, Uniting Church in Australia
Rev Wilfred Kurepitu, Moderator, Uniting Church in Solomon Islands
Rev Dr Finau 'Ahio, President, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
Rev Bill Mullally, President, Methodist Church of Ireland
Rev Masunu Utumapu, Superintendent Auckland South Synod for Methodist Church in Samoa

Observers from Other New Zealand Churches:

Sr. Sian Owen, Pompallier Diocesan Centre, Roman Catholic Church
Carlo David, Pompallier Diocesan Centre, Roman Catholic Church
Rt Rev Andrew Norton, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Rev Wayne Matheson, General Secretary, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Rev Wayne Toleafoa, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Rev Fakafo Kaio, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Archbishop Winston Halapua, The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
Archdeacon Carole Hughes, The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
Rev Anne Mills, The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
Rev Adrian Skelton, Executive Officer, Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand

Invited Guests:

Mr Len Brown, Mayor of Auckland
Mr Andrew Little, Leader of the New Zealand Labour Party

SATURDAY

It was very early Saturday morning when a smallish group of supporters gathered for the **turning of the first sod of the development at Wesley College called WESLEY, a New Town**. Karakia was said by Kaumatua from local Tainui iwi to bless the ground and so ensure smooth progress ahead.

At 9:30am, the supporters group was enhanced by members of conference and other attendees from the local community as well as staff and parents from Wesley College.

Marian Farquarson brought with her an old photograph album which also contained early historical records of the school.

Chris Johnston welcomed everyone and briefly outlined the background to the project and the future intentions with regard to an eventual replacement of Wesley College with a 21st century school on another site somewhere in the area. The first stage of the development of about 300 sections would provide income for future expansion and funds towards the construction of the new school.

Ian Mune, an old student of the college, spoke of challenges he had witnessed over the years and saw this development as a further evolutionary step to keep pace with the changing demands of society.

President Tovia Aumua spoke of the future of Wesley College and for the housing of people in the new town and then launched the development with a symbolic sod-turning.

At 10:30am, members and guests waited in the carpark, outside the Recreation Centre for the **Powhiri** followed by the welcome by our hosts the iwi of Te Taha Maori, Trinity Theological College, Vahefonua Tonga O' Aotearoa and Wesley College. This was followed by the **Opening service including Honouring those who have died**: Kepu Moa, Alan John Leadley QSM, Margaret Anne Ziegler, Verna Elaine Mossong QSM, Joyce K. Dey, Gillian Mary Watkin, Mavis Jean Tauroa, Winiata Morunga, Mary Russell, Edna Garner, Mervyn Wilkinson Hancock, Siosua Molia Tu'itupou, George McKay Hammond, Taniela Takapautolo Moala, Gordon Green, Hilda Mary Astley-Ford, Rupeni Balawa Delai and Violet Hesse. Thoughtful reflections were presented for these people with lovely photos of each individual displayed on large screens. There were two sung blessings during this period by the Morunga Whanau and the Hastings Trio. The families of the deceased were hosted to lunch in the lounge of the Recreation Centre.

The afternoon started with **The Induction of President Prince Devanadan and Vice President Viv Whimster**. 'Moored to Christ, moving into mission' was the theme of their address. They charged us all to identify the injustices of our day and discover how to address them seeking us to look for ways and means to be true to our calling as Methodists:

He bids us build each other up;
and gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

Recognition of Retirees

Conference farewelled several presbyters who have held leadership and pastoral roles. Their many years of service reflected the diversity of the Methodist Church and the many ways in which ministry is giving.

We acknowledged Faiva Alaelua, Shirley Joy Barrow, Donald Biggs, Sandra Gibbons and Iaitia Tuwere. Absent but also acknowledged: David Bell and Neil Keesing.

A special acknowledgement was made of retiring Executive Director Greg Wright for his leadership and contribution to investment and property management for the connexion.

Saturday evening

The evening meal was the **Conference dinner**, held in the dining room at the College. This had a big attendance of the conference members and guests. The MC's for the evening were Michael Lemanu and Ramona Misilei, leaders of our youth groups. We were entertained with Sri Lankan dancing by Ishara Dhambagolla, a talented University of Auckland student. Her first dance was Kandyan and later in the evening, she did a Tamil Bharathanatyan dance.

The guest speaker for the evening was Andrew Little, leader of the Labour Party. He complimented members of the Methodist Church of NZ by saying we were a "shining example of living our beliefs". He said most Kiwis are progressive, big-hearted and live in a country of plenty, and we should not have poverty and homelessness. Little referred to David Lange, Russell Marshall and David Caygill, Methodist politicians who had taken positive actions, not just words.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the evening was the opportunity to thank Mr Greg Wright for all he has done for the Methodist Church of NZ in the 38 years of service.

Hugh Garlic spoke as the retiring Chairperson of the Methodist Trust Association (MTA), complimenting Greg on his work ethic, his sense of humour, and his being the "go-to" person. Greg has served the church well with his careful, considered expertise and was a much loved and loyal staff member.

David Bush spoke as General Secretary and a member of the Board of Administration. He said Greg displayed an amazing sense of "wanting to do his best for the church". This was often shown but, in particular, when dealing with the Christchurch earthquake matters. The church owes a great debt of gratitude.

Jill van de Gear paid tribute to Greg's wife Annette and daughter Melissa, saying how often Greg had been away from home, missing significant events in their lives. Jill said that Annette and Melissa were valued every bit as much as they value Greg.

The final speaker was Tumuaki Diana Tana representing Te Taha Maori. She referred to a long list of significant Maori people who have worked and debated with Greg, they were all recipients of Greg's wisdom, care and knowledge and all Te Taha people will hold fast to the things he has taught them. Diana Tana then concluded her dedication to Greg by calling for Te Taha Maori members to sing a waiata as she presented Greg with a pounamu taonga. This was followed by a short thank you speech by President Prince who presented Greg with a cheque on behalf of the Methodist Church of NZ. Greg replied in his humble manner, and thanked everyone for their kind words. The evening concluded with a small group of Tongan dancers, introduced by Makelesi Ngata.

SUNDAY

Conference gathered together for morning worship led by President Prince and Vice President Viv before breaking into the **Te Taha Maori and Taiwi Meetings** to discuss specific concerns and ideas. This gives each partner the opportunity to prepare what to report to the other when Conference begins its business sessions on Monday.

During lunchtime on Sunday the **Lay Preachers** shared a meal and fellowship following their annual meeting.

The afternoon saw the Recreation Centre filled to overflowing for the **Ordination Service**. The Ordinands were Hui Young Han, Oka Leti, Matafonua Langi, Alipate Livani, Siutaisa Tukutau Ex President Tovia Aumua was the preacher using the theme: You have been called: "Not to be served, But to serve." He charged the Ordinands with three important pieces of information:

There is no one style or model of leadership that is better or more important than another. A good leader will make it their business to know and understand the culture, the nature and the needs of the organisation or

group that you are going to serve. We are ordaining you to service, not to status. You must have love, growing and burning within you – you can't serve the people with love if you don't have it. Go and serve the people with respect, with humility and with love as you remember: For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.

The service concluded by receiving into full Connexion the Ordinands and Maurice McLaughlin from the Baptist Union of NZ and Colin Gordon from the Presbyterian Church of NZ.

Afternoon tea was served in the dining room and this brought to an end the formal business for the day.

There were two evening meetings with food. The first was the Liberal Society/Evangelical Network Meeting and the second was the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Network and Friends Dinner. Both groups enjoyed fellowship together over good food.

MONDAY

Please note: All Conference agenda papers are on the Methodist website <http://www.methodist.org.nz/conference/2016>.

The Conference candle was lit as President Prince and vice-President Viv welcomed everyone to the commencement of the **Business Sessions of Conference**.

Opening worship was lead by Trinity College with Keitha Hokere and Te Aroha Rountree as facilitators. Based on 1 Kings 21 over inherited lands, they shared three global scenarios asking Conference members to discuss how to empower/restore dignity of the indigenous people involved.

Introduction to Conference of staff and official guests followed. We were reminded of the Consensus Decision Making Conference process. An important part of the life of Conference is the stationing sheet listing appointments for the coming year. This was received and adopted as members stood and the President prayed for all of their families.

Council of Conference

The issue of two-year Conferences was discussed. Mary Caygill and Trinity College representatives were concerned about the negative impact two-year Conferences had on Trinity College students who are to be ordained and received into full connexion. David Bush responded that there is possibility for students to be received into full connexion with or without the Conference but ALL students are to be ordained during Conference, as per usual. It was confirmed that the decision of Conference 2015 which affected the rights and privileges of the clergy and the Laity "That for a trial period between 2016 and 2020 the Methodist Church meets for Conference every second year. Conference will therefore meet in 2016, 2018, 2020. Co-convenor, Opeta Amani, brought up 'Let the Children Live', encouraging the members of Conference to be the change they wish to see in the world. This idea was supported by a video. David Bush asked all members to thank their parishes for their very worthwhile contributions to the connexional budget through the Connexional banking arrangements and for their contributions to the work of the wider church.

Te Taha Maori

A key focus for Te Taha Maori is capacity building in the areas of human resourcing and communications.

They have welcomed two new staff members. Mereana Meleisea as Office Administrator and Te Wehenga Laird as Kaiarahi Rangatahi in Tamaki Rohe.

Evangelical Network

Alan Webster asked the members of Conference to discuss how they came to faith, stating that this question, the word of God and our engagement are extremely important in understanding the work of the Evangelical Network.

There was some concern expressed with the report as it was really a detailed history of the Evangelical Network but did not give their current stance and mission.

Board of Administration

Matters concerning Methodist Trust Association were outlined by Greg Wright. Following this, the chair of Methodist Trust Association, Hugh Garlick, sincerely expressed the Conference's deep appreciation for the long service of 38 years that Greg has served the Conference, Connexion and wider Methodist Church with such great distinction.

Stephen Walker who has been appointed as Executive Officer of the MTA/IAB will commence in the office mid-November was introduced to Conference.

Supernumerary Fund

Nine going on ten years have passed since any adjustment has been given to the members pension entitlement. The current status of the fund and the absence of meaningful communication and consultation have created among Supernumeraries a concern of justice that the church needs to urgently address. The members of Conference gave their wholehearted support to the notice of motion brought by ex-President, Tovia Aumua, and ex-vice President, Dr. Arapera Ngaha, that a review be undertaken urgently by the Supernumerary Fund in conjunction with the trustee focusing on finding ways and means of increasing the capital of the fund and explore other alternatives.

Connexional Property Committee

Last year the decisions in respect of New Building Standards (NSB) were put on hold until the Government determined the standards they required everyone to meet in the earthquake Prone Buildings Act. These were announced this year and Methodist Church Property Committee (MCPC) brought the requirements the Conference would need to put in place for all Methodist Churches.

Several speakers requested that the church accept the processes required by central Government and administered by the Local Government Authority which requires a minimum of 34%NBS with a timetable to complete the strengthening and the level of strengthening to be achieved. After a two and fro conversation between several speakers and Greg Wright, the facilitator for MCPC, the Conference agreed to the higher standard as requested by MCPC.

Methodist Mission Aotearoa / Social Services

The Mission Alliance Establishment (MAE) working group presented the positives for Parishes and all social service groups in joining the Methodist Alliance.

The important features of this venture include:

- Working towards a bi-cultural future for Aotearoa New Zealand
- Support the work of members, through the promotion of best practice and high ethical and professional standards
- Leverage the collective skills, experience, imagination and resources to work towards building a just and inclusive society
- Increase the visibility of the work being undertaken by the Methodist Church of New Zealand/ Te Hahi Weteriana O Aetearoa, and the capacity to influence public policy
- Ensure that the voice of those without power is heard and that the conditions that perpetuate injustice are confronted
- Adhere to, and action, the Social Principles of the Methodist Church of New Zealand/ Te Hahi Weteriana O Aotearoa
- Enable members to work openly and collectively
- Celebrate the diversity of its members
- Undertake any other tasks as given to it by the Methodist Church

Conference approved the establishment of the Methodist Alliance as a Connexional body under the discipline of the Conference.

Trinity College

Trinity Theological College has established more formal links with Wesley College. The Principal of Trinity College is now a member of the Board of Trustees of Wesley College and the Principal of Wesley College is a member of the Trinity College Council.

An important move for theological training in New Zealand moving forward is the theological providers like Trinity, Laidlaw, Carey, St Johns and Knox are considering the possibility of forming a new partnership in indigenous theologies. The vision is to promote solidarity in theological education by creating a network where colleges can share resources, programmes and teaching.

The College continues to value its partnership with the College of St John the Evangelist. Both colleges are involved in an ongoing conversation to renegotiate and strengthen their partnership after several years of separation without consultation. The Board and management of St John's College have again offered office spaces for Trinity College staff in the main office building, Wesley Centre.

Wesley College Trust Board

The Wesley College Special character continues to provide the basis for all that takes place at Wesley College.

Wesley College seeks to provide a broad-based education with special attentions to numeracy, literacy and other key competencies. Wesley College has a special obligation to provide education for students of Maori and Pacific Islands descent and students whose family and personal circumstances require special care.

NCEA levels have again risen again.

Excited about the prospect of building a new school on a yet to be purchased site. An architect has been appointed and plans are beginning to be developed.

Anglican Methodist Covenant

The evening session was devoted to the Anglican Methodist Covenant – The Irish model followed by a panel discussion. The President of the Irish Conference Rev Bill Mullally addressed the Conference. He outlined how this came about in Ireland. Their talks were trilateral, then bicultural and much discussion as a joint theological working party was thought to be very important. Relationship, unity and mission were starting topics.

Susan Thompson spoke about her experience of sharing with the Waikato Waiariki Synod the possibility of working closer with the Anglicans. Whilst the Synod acknowledged they wished to explore further the seeking of mutual recognition of spirituality, their concerns about episcopal ministry was thought by some, that it may introduce hierarchy, bishops, which is not Kiwi.

Rev Professor Robert Griffin, an ordained Methodist minister in Australia, outlined how the establishment binds the Anglican and Methodists together through Faith and Order.

The Chaplains led close of day before extinguishing the Conference candle and people dispersed for a restful night.

TUESDAY

Today we opened with **morning worship** led by Trinity College.

Jione Havea, a lecturer in theology from Australia who is currently the scholar in residence at our Theological College, asked the question What would the Treaty look like if we conceptualised the Treaty based on our understanding of Waitangi and reading of Judges 11?

The Conference broke into **Business Committees** for the business we will process today to enable discussion about their work to be outlined and questions, concerns and hints could be brought forward and in some cases clarified before that business reached the floor.

Communications

Touchstone maintains its high standard of publication as a connexional publication.

Media and Communications requested that parishes draw on all funds available especially those in Uniting parishes when applying for funding.

More attention needs to be given by Parishes to the way they fill in applications.

Mission Resourcing

The report of the Tauwiwi Children, young people and families ministry marks two years for this ministry. Michael Lemanu highlighted a number of aspects of his work especially a renewed relationship with Children's Education Commission. A new innovation this year was to have eight young people as Interns to assist in tasks and activities at Conference as part of their leadership training and understanding of Methodism.

Chaplaincy in its many forms comes under the umbrella of Mission Resourcing and there is great concern re the direction of Hospital Chaplaincy.

As well as being responsible for Candidates, Mission Resourcing takes responsibility for the orientation of ministers new to MCNZ.

Let the Children Live is an exciting part of their work. They have produced a poster – 101 for Let the Children Live.

Rev (Deacon) Sandy Boyce, President, DIAKONIA World Federation, presented a brief overview of some of the diversity of diaconal ministries within the member associations, and the ecclesiology in which those ministries are placed. She left us with the question, what kind of model for ministry is required in our particular context, and how may the church orient its life to be a diaconal or servant church, where all ministries serve that purpose, and where the laity are encouraged and equipped to exercise their ministry in every sphere of life in society.

Reflections of Ex President Tovia and Ex Vice President Bella

They enjoyed the many and varied celebrations, inductions they presided over and opportunities they were given. Their photos gave a visual review of places visited and highlighted - Oihi Bay celebrations on Christmas Day 2014, the Coronation of King Tupou IV in Tonga, Koroneihana 10th King Tuheitia and the 150 years of Toupou College Tonga.

They thanked all those who had helped and supported them. Tovia's final word was spoken in Samoan "the Heavenly Language."

Mission and Ecumenical

Grateful thanks were expressed to all those who have given donations to assist their work. Acknowledgement was given to the proud history we have in our involvement in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea,

CWS are very grateful for Methodist support. They urged parishes to promote and support this year's Christmas Appeal – Give us Hope.

Social Issues

Public Issues holds the wellbeing of children and families through the Living Wage and key policy issues in Aotearoa NZ alongside the big picture issues of climate, trade agreements, refugees, economy, jobs and housing.

The Conference requested the President to make a clear and public statement supporting, on our behalf, the call of the Children's Commissioner, Judge Andrew Becroft, for a cross party target to reduce by 10% the number of children living in poverty by the end of 2017.

Overseas Guests

Many overseas guests attended the Conference (*see list at the beginning of the summary*). They brought to us their flavour of Methodism when they shared aspects of their work.

WEDNESDAY

Emily Cogan, lecturer in Theological Studies at Trinity College, led our morning worship commencing with a meditation on Psalm 46:10

Using the theme Let the Children Live we listed all the instances we could think of where children appear in biblical texts. Concern was expressed in the number of times children appeared in references in the context of violence.

Law Revision

The work of Law Revision was received and amendments to Section 5. 7. 14 1.1 and following Professional Development Grants Committee; Section 8 Disciplinary code; Section 11(D) Trinity Theological College; Section 10. 20.1.1 and following Supernumerary Fund were approved.

Sinoti Samoa updated the conference on their Women's Fellowship building project -Tafa O Ata seeking Conference's ongoing support of their project. So far \$1.5million and counting has been raised.

Faith and Order

Will begin a process of:

(a) Consultation and conversation about Methodism and Methodist identity both as a learning process for Methodists and as a contribution and insight to bring to ecumenical dialogue.

(b) Consultation and evaluation in order to provide appropriate guidelines for persons other than presbyters who are licensed to celebrate the sacraments.

Will continue work on Leadership, and ecumenical dialogues.

Mission Resourcing

Reminded that Let the Children live 101 poster is available for all conference attendees to take back to their parishes

Lay Preaches work advised that 16 new lay preachers have been accredited during the year.

Board of Administration

They concluded their work commending all those who hold their accounts with the BNZ as this has enabled a grant towards the Connexional budget of \$57,956 which equates to almost 8% of the Connexional budget allocation this year.

Health and Safety legislation was outlined by Wendy Anderson the new Property and Insurance Manager
The process for the ongoing development of Grafton Downs 'Wesley New Town' project was outlined.

Professional Grants Committee

Drew members attention to their fund for ordained and lay members professional development.

MWF

It is gratifying to see younger members join MWF particularly from the Pacific Synods. Special Project 2016-2017 is Let God's Light Shine – Overseas arm is Nicaragua and National arm Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

The new President Dianne Claughton was introduced to the Conference.

The report of the **Inter-Church Bioethics Council (ICBC)** an ecumenical cross-cultural body was received

Memorials

Wesley Historical was given the task in consultation with Te Taha Maori and Mission Resourcing of preparing a plan for the celebration of the 200th Wesleyan Mission in Aotearoa/NZ

President and Vice President

It was reported to Conference that the 5 + 5 had been unable to reach a consensus for these positions. The Conference worked through a process to be used in 2017. The Pastoral Committee statement is available separately on the website.

The final act of the business sessions is a period of thanks from the Presidential team for all those who have assisted in arranging this Conference followed by the hosts handing the conference banner to Central South Island Synod who are grateful that they are now in the position of welcoming the Conference back to Christchurch in 2018.

Covenant Service

Moored to Christ, Moving into Mission - Looking for ways and means to be true to our calling as Methodists was the theme our Presidential team's focussed on as they sent us out from the Covenant Service to conclude Conference 2016.

WANT TO SEE MORE?

Did you miss the weekend services and/or the live streaming?

The events of the opening weekend of Conference were recorded and are available online – see links at <http://www.methodist.org.nz/conference/2016>.

**NEXT CONFERENCE IS IN CHRISTCHURCH!
NOVEMBER 2018 (date TBA)**