

TAUIWI STRATEGY & STATIONING

In the Tauwi Strategy and Stationing report to Conference 2016 we noted the change in the nature of the agenda of the meeting from considering written papers on various topics (most of which went nowhere) to a more discursive approach to look at big issues facing the church's mission and ministry. The report went on to state:

It is unreasonable to expect any quick fixes or easy solutions. The challenge will be to follow up these conversations in such a focused way that they do not in future turn out to have been just hot air, but stepping stones towards reshaping our life and mission...

That is a tough challenge to meet and we could say the jury is still out in some regards to matters we raised then and how we have progressed since. We are aware, however, that talk needs to become action at some point. What follows is a brief history of what we have been discussing since that last Conference report.

PART A: REPORTING BACK

Tauwi Strategy held in February 2017 welcomed Dick Clayton as the new lay representative for CSI synod, Rev Tony Franklin-Ross as co-superintendent for LNI synod and Rev Andrew Doubleday as Evangelical Network representative.

The meeting spent some time looking at the process to be used for selecting the next presidential team after the impasse at Conference 2016. The committee also looked at a proposed reinstatement process for presbyters, deacons and probationers which was well received and was to be taken by the General Secretary to the Council of Conference for approval.

A session was held on transitional ministry and Rev Marilyn Welch and Rev Kathryn Walters have recently attended a transitional ministry conference in the USA and have shared their latest insights at the July 2018 meeting.

We also received a report from the Tauwi youth and children's ministry worker, Michael Lemanu, who reported on the theme '3-2-1 Unite' which called for youth meetings across the cultural boundaries. Michael was invited to the July 2017 meeting to follow this up and has appeared at subsequent meetings of Tauwi Strategy..

A discussion was held on Professional Development, but this is one of those topics that seem to have slipped through the cracks. At the meeting we discussed whether some element of Professional Development should be made compulsory for presbyters and deacons, but this has not yet been followed up and no recommendations have yet been made.

We returned also to a familiar theme – that of whether returning to a circuit model might enable us to keep a presence in places that are currently under threat. Conversations have continued and are continuing to address this question and it is likely that we shall see the re-emergence of structures we can identify as circuits in the next few years.

Tauwi Strategy meeting held in July 2017 convened at the Misinale celebration being held at Dominion Road Tongan church. The meeting reconvened the following day and opened with a theological reflection on the nature of Methodist theology and tradition led by the presidential team. We then welcomed Rev Adrian Skelton from UCANZ who explained the proposals for changing the way in which national and regional levies are received from CV congregations. This subject will appear elsewhere in the Conference 2018 agenda.

The meeting was then introduced to the 20/20 Vision Paper which has emanated from a subcommittee of the Council of Conference. This paper has featured in a number of subsequent synod and parish workshops. Its chief focus is to ask: How can we cope better in a declining church?

For the first time at Tauwi Strategy we broke into caucus groups – English-speaking and Pasifika. It was recognized that the English-speaking part of the church is in a critical condition in many

parts of the country and unless we address new ways of working (20/20 Vision Paper, circuit model, etc) we face extinction in some regions within a few years.

We thanked Christine Peak of Auckland synod at her last meeting for her contribution over a number of years to this committee.

The first meeting of 2018 was held in early March at the Mary MacKillop Centre, Auckland. Our opening worship included an update on happenings in Northland. After much hard work and encouragement from Rowan Smiley, together with some connexional support, the Redhill Camp has been saved from closure and is now up and running again. After protracted and delicate negotiations led by Rev Marilyn Welch and Rowan Smiley a Methodist presbyter was inducted again at Kaitaia. It is many years since a Methodist has been welcome to serve in this parish and it is heartening to see that such ill-feeling can be turned around, but only at a cost of a great deal of time, energy and patience. This situation is duplicated in various parts of the country and the new UCANZ procedures may bring matters to a head in some locations. A new Education Committee for Northland was established again for the first time in many years following a successful Lay Ministry Support event held in the area. Such are the encouraging stories from Northland which have their counterparts in all synods. The state of the church is a mixed picture, but we must not give up hope, despite the critical challenges we face.

During 2018 a decision had to be made to cease operating as a combined synod in the north. The workload for the synod superintendent is overwhelming, especially dealing with stationing issues, and there isn't enough money to sustain the work anyway. So with some reluctance, the three synods are looking to go their separate ways. Northland, Auckland, Manukau will cooperate where possible, but each will have its own leadership. Northland synod will stand independently from the CTN group after many years because the Presbyterian Church also wishes to establish a new subgrouping of their parishes in Northland region.

The meeting was also introduced to the approved format of the Service Tenancy Agreement for anyone living in a Methodist owned or funded house. Nicola Grundy and Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune introduced their thinking about the new format for Conference 2018. Stephen Walker gave a talk about the role of MTA and their updated ethical investment guidelines. Rachel Masterton reported on the Methodist Alliance's inaugural Forum held in November 2017. A team from TYC reported on the Tauwi Youth Conference which had the theme: To Know Christ. Our young people are in good heart and some encouraging numbers are seen at many events. Increasingly we hear from the younger people of the church a request to be told more about the nature of our Methodist approach to life and faith. This report was followed by a conversation about how we can best cater for our younger members. We seek a balance between giving them the space on their own to express their faith in age-appropriate ways and yet holding them sufficiently close to the older generations so that our Methodist identity can be safely passed down across the generations and into the future. We wish to bequeath our denominational heritage not in the manner of former times when it was done in a spirit of rivalry and disdain for other traditions, but in today's ecumenical spirit of adding to the total wealth of spiritual treasures of the People of God in an age when Christians may belong to more than one tradition at the same time, or taste several flavours of Christianity over the course of a lifetime; we believe Methodism deserves to be one of those flavours on offer.

In late July 2018 Tauwi Strategy convened once more at the Mary MacKillop Centre in Auckland. After hearing more of the new arrangements for Conference this year, we received guidance about the system to be used among Tauwi again this year for the election of our nominations for President and Vice-President. We then spent two sessions discussing two items sent on to us from Council of Conference – firstly concerning Tauwi's responsibilities in the bicultural journey which resulted in the suggested decision at the end of this report and secondly, we discussed the problem of over working our lay and ordained leaders with an ever-growing list of things we must do to comply with the law as well as a seemingly endless list of tasks to fulfil our mission. There is a suggested decision elsewhere in the Conference agenda to change the standard working week of our presbyters from 48 hours to 40 hours.

Revs Marilyn Welch and Kathryn Walters reported back over a series of half a dozen short slots in our programme about a recent course on transitional ministry which they attended on behalf of our church in the USA, a trip supported by the Professional Development Grants Committee. Marilyn and Kathryn hope to make this learning more widely available during the coming year. Please contact them for further details.

Suggested decisions:

1. That the report be received.
2. Taiwi Strategy Committee nominates the following people for the following posts:
For Council of Elders – Rev Tovia Aumua
For the Conference Panel: Rev Marilyn Welch, Ruta Fa’afuata, Mataiva Robertson, Ngaire Southon, with Rev Tony Franklin-Ross as Co-Convenor and Rev Metui Tafuna as reserve.

Part B: Future Strategy

3. Taiwi Strategy Committee resolves to promote the marking throughout Taiwi parishes of the following dates in the calendar: Waitangi Day; Matariki; Parihaka Day. People with suitable resources are asked to send them to Mission Resourcing who, in consultation with Te Taha Maori, will make them available on the Mission Resourcing website.

SYNOD REPORTS

NORTHLAND AUCKLAND MANUKAU

Northland:

Northland has undergone several significant changes in the last two years. In spite of resistance to having a Methodist appointment to our northern-most parish, through the dedicated work of Rowan Smiley and Robyn McPhail (from the Presbyterian Church) we were able to station a Methodist presbyter for the first time in over twenty years. This appointment along with another stationed presbyter in Whangarei brought the number of presbyters to four with one deacon, the first time in many years.

Because of the decision taken by Northern Presbytery to have Northland become its fifth region it has necessitated the reinstatement of the Northland Methodist Synod as a separate entity and decision-making body in its own right. This has been difficult for many but it now gives us more of a voice on matters affecting Methodists in Northland. Churches Together in Northland will now become a Forum where inspiration, education etc will be its focus and the business side will be conducted by the denominational groups which will caucus after each Forum meeting.

Earlier this year we began a Koinonia group for Methodist deacons and presbyters. This was proved to be a good step forward for collegiality and a place to raise issues that affect clergy. There are still parishes that do not have presbyters and their financial situation is that they probably never will.

Our education workshops and seminars have been well attended and have empowered everyone to be active in ministry.

We farewelled Mary Nicholas as she retired at the end of 2017.

As from next year Northland will have its own Synod Superintendent and Kuli Fusi’ahi will take up that role.

As the cost of housing and living is becoming extremely expensive many people are leaving Auckland and moving to the north which poses a real challenge for the synod to embrace new ways of being church and offer hospitality to the new-comers.

Auckland

Last year Auckland had six changes of ministry and 2018 has the same. This has brought some new life and vibrancy to our parishes and synods.

Auckland has been growing at a rapid rate and we have spent time considering how we can be a creative Christian presence in new developing areas. With the release of extra financial resources for Mission Resourcing we hope to apply for funding to be able to have a community development worker placed in one or two of these areas. The cost of housing has sky-rocketed in the region and with that has brought high levels of homeless and poverty. Many of our parishes are working to offer ministry to those in their communities who have been affected by such social issues. Methodist Mission Northern has been instrumental in moving in this area.

As for many other places in the connexion a very big challenge for us is the seismic strengthening of church buildings. Many parishes do not have the expertise from within their own congregations to deal with this and MASPAC (our Property committee) spends a lot of time helping parishes understand the implications and what they need to do in order to get their buildings up to code. Unfortunately many parishes also do not have the finances to rectify these. The retirement of Keith Taylor from MASPAC has meant a total re-evaluation as to how the committee functions. Keith's ministry has been a highly effective ministry and many parishes as well as the synod owe much to Keith's commitment and determination. Jan Tasker has agreed to become the convenor of this important committee.

Last year, together with Northland and Manukau we had a very successful residential School of Theology for those who attended but our numbers were disappointing and cost was given as the reason. So this year's which was non-residential was very well attended. In lieu of last year's conference we decided to have a Workshop Day for all parishes and this was held in April and was well attended and the presenters' input much appreciated. Our Combined Synods' Koinonia group continues to meet each quarter for Holy Communion, fellowship and a meal.

Auckland will now also be a separate Synod, and Rev Graeme White has been nominated for a 50% Superintendency.

Manukau:

There have been no parishes or presbyters on stationing for the last two years. This has given some sense of stability within the synod.

Like Auckland the rate of housing development in the southern part of the synod has been phenomenal and this will have a huge impact on the region. The population over the next ten years will increase by thousands and the need for tradespeople to meet the housing crisis continues to be a challenge. However this does give the synod a great opportunity to offer creative ways of sharing the gospel of Christ and being a witness in these communities as they develop. Wesley College's housing development Grafton Downs, is well underway.

Manukau Synod has made the decision to be independent next year and is working through their own process of how synodical ministry will be exercised with everyone taking on a role of some kind. However, there will still be some things that may still be done with Auckland such as property and Schools of Theology.

As I retire from my role as Combined Synods' Superintendent and rewire for whatever life may be preparing for me I want to express my thanks to the superintendency team of Rowan Smiley, Dilys Davies and Jackie Mc George who have supported me in my ministry and achieved an incredible amount for their respective synods. Thanks also to the Connexional Staff and Mission Resourcing Directors for their assistance with some challenging issues and some fun times. And to the other Synod Superintendents from around the country thanks for your welcome, support and collegiality. May the Spirit continue its movement both in and among Methodists in Aotearoa.

Marilyn Welch with Rowan Smiley, Dilys Davies, Jackie Mc George.

WAIKATO WAIARIKI

The last two years have been busy and productive ones for the Synod. We've built upon past successes and embraced new initiatives.

The Synod continues to have a full diary of opportunities for people to share and grow together in worship, professional development and fellowship.

Highlights included Ministerial Synod workshops with Jill van de Geer from the Taiwi Sexuality Work Group (2017) and with Marilyn Welch on Boundaries in Ministry (2018), lay preachers' training days on interfaith relations with Todd Nachowitz from the Religious Diversity Centre (2017) and on ecological readings of the Bible with Dr Emily Colgan from Trinity College (2018), Synod Refresh which focused on rural ministry (2018) and our annual Synod Quiet Days.

This focus on education is essential in upskilling our presbyters and in helping to train new lay preachers. By Conference 2018 we will have welcomed three new lay preachers to the Synod. All our lay preachers offer an invaluable ministry.

In October 2017 we held "Give it a go!", a weekend of worship, workshops and wonders. Our guest speaker was Dr Edwina Pio, University Director of Diversity at Auckland University of Technology. People came from all over the District, from all of the cultural groups within the Synod area and from the Lower North Island Synod. We received very positive feedback about the event and will hold a similar gathering in the next non-Conference year.

Intentional conversations about the future of parishes have continued to be held on both sides of the Kaimai Ranges.

These have led to the decision to form a new Tauranga Moana Circuit which would include groups in Otumoetai, Tauranga, Mt Maunganui, Te Puke and Kawerau. The administration of the parishes is currently being centralised and a transitional executive has been formed. It is hoped that the Circuit might come into being in late 2019. We are very grateful to Maureen Calman for walking alongside the Te Puke-Mt Maunganui Parish during this process.

In Hamilton a long legal process culminated in approval being given for the St Paul's Methodist Church to be moved to a new site in Te Kowhai. This has freed the Hamilton Parish to think creatively and strategically about the future of their central city site. Conversations are in their early stages but are including other Methodist parishes in Hamilton, Methodist City Action, the Synod and other interested groups.

Over the last two years it has been a joy to see youth ministry developing within the Synod. Our youth leaders, Alilia Molitika and Amelia Takataka, have supported local youth groups and been involved in Taiwi Youth Conference. The Synod has supported them by providing regular mentoring, a small youth budget and leadership opportunities at Synod Executive. We have been inspired by the youth vision, "He waka eke noa": we are all in this together.

LOWER NORTH ISLAND

The Synod leadership team is working well together, though so far we've been unable to appoint a Secretary. The Co-Superintendency with a combined resource of 0.6 FTE has resulted in day-to-day issues being attended to, at the cost of little strategic mission development. We have taken the view that we have primary responsibility to support and encourage the 6 Methodist 'cornerstone' parishes in the Synod – the first step being long-overdue parish reviews. A monthly Synod newsletter "SALT" has been launched to improve communication and visibility of the parishes in the Synod. Executive meet regularly via Skype for Business – saving time and the environment – with an annual in-person meeting. The Connexional Office is providing accounting services which is of great assistance.

LNIS covers 40 parishes: 6 are Methodist the remainder Cooperative Ventures. Only one has Sunday attendance above 150, about 20 parishes have an attendance of 50 – 80, the rest 20 or less. These numbers are exacerbated by generally declining numbers – largely through natural attrition. The issue is not so much that we are losing people but rather failing to gain replacements; particularly as parish lay leaders age with no next-generation leadership.

Schools of Theology have been held in regions of one day duration rather than a multi-day annual event. These have been held in Levin, Napier and Hamilton (hosted by Waikato-Wairiki), supported by workshops as part of Synod meetings. These have only been possible with the assistance and valuable contribution of Mission Resourcing.

Parishes sharing buildings continue to cause unnecessary heartache for all concerned. Advanced planning is required to avoid potential friction.

Unfortunately we've seen the demise and closure of a number of parishes: Manaia Cooperating, Woodville Union and St Matthew's Cooperating Parish in Wellington. Others are just surviving. We have particular areas of concern in Taranaki and Wairarapa with many small congregations, little active experience of MCNZ or the Synod, only one with a FT and 2 with part time Presbyters. We intend to put additional resources in these areas to explore and develop new models of ministry in partnership with Mission Resourcing, using funding derived from closed parishes.

A contributing factor to the above malaise is the management of parish property. In our experience this can be very time and people-resource hungry. In the end this effort is directed at supporting the continuance and wellbeing of the 'institutional organisation'. This doesn't mean it should be ignored, but we need to consider different models which will free up church members to work towards the mission vision. Perhaps there should be an option for parishes to engage the services of a nationally set-up property management cooperative. This would ensure legal compliance and provide expertise where required and hence free up scarce people resource. A change of mind-set and training will be required if we are to become 'missional'. Without new members we will become ever weaker.

In a regular forum, we meet with Presbytery Central and Anglicans to share knowledge and oversight of the 33 Union and Cooperating parishes. This is working well and will enable good joint communication of administrative changes proposed by UCANZ.

A smaller-than-needed number of reviews have been completed as it's difficult to find people with the right skills and time. We perceive this to be a real and dangerous weakness.

NELSON MARLBOROUGH WEST COAST

The two years since Conference last met have been momentous for us.

First of all February 2017 saw the inductions of the Rev Alofa Asiata to Wesley Parish, Blenheim and the Rev Janet Marsh to St Andrew's Uniting, Motueka. This was effectively a renewal of 50% of our total number of stationed presbyters and both appointments have been tremendously positive.

We have worked on our relationship with Christchurch Methodist Mission, which despite the name engages in forms of mission not only in Canterbury but in Marlborough, Nelson and the West Coast. They co-manage with the Synod the Green Gables Trust, which seeks to make disbursements which will contribute towards significant projects for the social good in our district. We also have made disbursements from the Camp Snowden fund, it is primarily, but not exclusively, aimed at projects supporting children, young people and their families and is perhaps the prime way we have sought to engage with the goals of the Let the Children Live campaign.

Shortly after last Conference Marlborough was impacted by a significant earthquake, this caused disruption to road and rail travel between Marlborough and Christchurch. It was necessary to re-check the seismic safety of our properties in Marlborough; fortunately no damage was sustained. This year there have been damaging storms in the Nelson area and on the West Coast. Again no damage was done and in various places our people were ready to help those in need.

Both St John's in the City, Nelson and Wesley, Blenheim have been involved in interfaith initiatives in their communities.

St John's in the City, Nelson, has recently moved from its leased space in central Nelson to share the use of the Stoke Methodist Church. The congregation is involved in a period of reflection about its future which includes contemplating a merger with the Stoke-Richmond parish. Following the Rev David Poultney's departure for Dunedin in July the Rev David Moynan – a priest from the Church of Ireland who retired here with his wife - is on an 18 month contract to serve as .5 supply for St John's in the City. He is also .5 chaplain at Tasman Hospice.

At Stationing 2017 it was decided to appoint the Rev David Poultney to Dunedin Parish as of August 2018. This brought to the fore some necessary questions about the future of our synod and its leadership.

As of August the Synod has the Rev Kathryn Walters as Synod Superintendent. Over the next two years there will be a process of intentional engagement with Central South Island, doing some things together while maintaining our separate identity. We come to this knowing we have much to gain but confident we also have much to give. It could well be that the two synods formally merge in time. Among other advantages this means an enlarged synod would cover virtually the same area as Alpine Presbytery; with which we both have close relations.

CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND

2017 began with having 15 of our young people from 6 different parishes within the Central South Island synod attending Tauwi Youth Conference in Ngaruawahia. This was an encouraging start to the year and on their return the young folk shared in parishes and Synod around the District.

During our March Synod it was decided that we would like to focus on understanding the Church Structure, Different ways of being church and strengthening our relationship with Te Taha Maori. It was decided to invite members of Te Taha Maori to come to our August Synod and simply be with us have an opportunity to share their thoughts and what was happening within Te Taha Maori but basically let us get to know them better and they us. We had a fabulous August Synod at Pudding Hill Lodge under the snowcapped peaks. It was filled with love and laughter and we delighted in the renewed friendships with the 4 members from Te Taha Maori who were able to come – Rev. Diana Tana, Rev. Rex Nathan, Rev. Keita Hotere and Roz Wilkie. Our understanding was greatly enriched and we commend to other Synods to offer hospitality to our partners in this informal and relaxed way.

As part of preparing for Conference 2018, our Synod also began to learn 5-6 waiata that can be sung in a variety of situations. Also as part of our preparation each Synod rep learned their pepeha in te reo. Our next goal (due to the timing and hosting of Conference) is to in 2019 have a pilgrimage of the local marae that have a historical relationship with the Methodist Church and to work proactively in re-establishing our relationship with them.

Walk for the Planet - 7 Rivers, 7 Weeks – an initiative by Rev. Mark Gibson and David Hill became a feature film "Seven Rivers Walking". This was with the help of some Methodist funding. It had its world premiere at the Isaac Theatre Royal in Christchurch on Saturday, August 19 as part of the winter edition of the New Zealand International Film Festival.

In November 2017 the Synod had a brief discussion about Combining Nelson- Marlborough West Coast Synod with the Central South Island Synod. It was felt that this would be a good match with the Alpine Presbytery and the Methodist Mission and allow for wider group input. However, there are concerns about the workload for the Superintendent, travel distances, retaining local geographical groups and where Synod would meet. It was clear that a good process was needed and that both Synods would need to compromise. Superintendent Kathryn Walters then met with the Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast Synod to introduce herself and to get to know this group of people. A similar conversation was had and many of the same concerns were voiced. As a result a covenant agreement was written that outlines a process of joining. Each Synod discussed this in 2018 and has been agreed to. In short the Covenant states that both Synods agree that during the period 1 August 2018 and Conference 2020 the two Synods will work collaboratively together with the intent to merge as one Synod. It is hoped that no later than August 2020 it is clear that it is either time to merge or that their needs are best served as separate entities with their own

arrangements for Superintendency.

In 2018 Synod supported 17 of our young folk to attend TYC18 in Taupo. 6 of these folk were first timers! Once again our people returned excited and inspired.

In February the new church at New Brighton Union was opened. Was a great event and wonderfully contemporary building to fits into the landscape of beach and sea beautifully.

In March approximately 50 folks turned up at 6.15am for the Maori blessing of the Durham St Site as the contractors took it over until the building is finished. There was a feeling of quiet celebration, tears were shed in the wet darkness, as we began a new era of Methodist care for this piece of land. The rain was welcomed, as civic and church folk mixed with the architects, contractors and family of those who died on the site in 2011. A moving and significant, quiet occasion. A week or two later a similar event took place at the Historic Woodend Methodist Church which is currently undergoing strengthening, repair and refurbishment.

At our March Synod we talked about some of the key concerns parishes and Synod is facing in our district. In among the growing struggle to find key lay leaders and other resource people, the decline of financial re-sources with which to fund ministry and mission, a growing “survival mentality” that holds on to what little is left (calling it good stewardship) rather that of a creative and open-handed generosity that invests in people not places, in amongst all these concerns, the question of identity was raised. Not Methodist identity or the identity of church or community to whom we might belong, but the fundamental question of who are we? Who am I? What is it I/we believe in—as a person of faith and member of a faith community? Who is the God we worship, serve and believe in, and why?

It was felt that if we cannot answer these questions, how can we share with the wider community the hope we have, the sense of belonging we feel, the joy of faith and the active living out of our faith? Why would anyone come and join with us if they can only rely on what media and contemporary culture says about the Christian faith which is often times very negative?

During our conversations a story was shared about a person who asked a group of people why they came to church. It took over 20 minutes and a half-dozen people for someone to say that they came to worship, with others, God. Most of the reasons had to do with fellowship, habit, loneliness and culture. The reality is that you can get those things at any community or sports group. WHO ARE WE? If identity is key – why do we not know? Is it that we are we afraid to know who we are? Have we lost the passion to know and be known by God? Have we become so comfortable with ourselves and our “holy huddle” that we no longer wrestle with our faith and ask of ourselves courageous questions? If we don’t know who we are, don’t know what we really believe (or are unwilling to name it), then how can we address the hurts and offer hope to the wider community?

As you can see we had many questions and not many answers. Why? Because the answers belong to each parish, each congregation. There is no set formula, no rules, no rescuer to tell you. The challenge given to the whole Synod was to ask the questions:

Do you struggle to articulate what you believe? Why do **you** go to church. Who God is for you and are you able to worship with others that celebrates God? What is **your** message of hope? Is your church a safe place to share your hopes, your passion, your thoughts? If not, why not? What are the things that are stopping you from inviting others to church?

The only way we can break this cycle of decline is to stop pointing the finger and look at who we are with honesty. To ask courageous questions of ourselves and others. To be able to be courageous in our listening and our answers. How can we help each other be messengers and doers of faith, hope and love in our communities?

On May 13th Waimate Methodist Parish held its final service. In spite of the parish not having stipended ministry for 20+ years this tenacious and faith-filled group have continued to provide weekly worship services. Their courageous choice to close has not come without some significant soul searching, grief and loss—but they have made it and on their terms. Their ministry to the

community will continue through the gifts of financial assistance to various groups and through a request to the Synod for on-going support from the Gunns Bush Legacy—to the Girls and Boy's Brigades who meet in Waimate.

In June Linwood Union Avenue Church enjoyed a celebration service in their refurbished premises complete with wonderful meeting rooms, commercial kitchen and spruced up hall.

Next year will see a significant change in the Synod makeup and dynamic with 10 of our parishes (not all Methodist appointments) having new ministers starting. We look forward to receiving new colleagues and their families into our wider Church family. We also grieve in our farewells of those who are moving on.

Like many other Synods and Rohe, over the past 2 years we have lost some of our beloved Church Elders: Rev Ernest (Ernie) Heppelthwaite, Maurice van de Geer, Ruby Martin, Peggy Averill Yeatman, Rev Fredrick (Fred) John Kennedy Baker, Celia Irvine, John Withell.

We remember these beloved members of our Church and their families and loved ones.

OTAGO SOUTHLAND

The picture of Methodism in Otago-Southland is patchy, with some areas doing very well, others not so well. On the positive side there has been growth in congregation numbers at Otatara and Invercargill, particularly the former which is considering a building project to accommodate Sunday services. Invercargill (Lindisfarne) celebrated the 20th Anniversary of its building in November 2017 in good style. Also good news is the completion of the earthquake strengthening of the Glenaven Church in Dunedin, and the similar projected work at St Kilda also in Dunedin, used at present by the Vahefonua congregation. In Central Otago there has been co-operation between the Alexandra-Clyde-Lauder Union Parish and the Methodist Mission Southern, using money held by the Synod, in developing work to support those looking for accommodation in the area.

On the less positive side the Brockville Union Parish has (at least temporarily) ceased to meet, having now lost their presbyter and run out of both money and energy. The three denominations (Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican) are looking to see if there is any hope for recommencing the work there after this break.

At the beginning of August there was an Induction of David Poultney as Superintendent of the Dunedin Parish. We look forward to David's contributions to parish and synod life. At the same time we have farewelled Siosifa Pole and wish him well in his new role in Te Hāhi.

SINOTI SAMOA

We continue to give praise to our Heavenly Father for His never ending love and care, for through Him everything has been made possible. The past 24 months has been a reflective time for Sinoti Samoa as it progresses with new initiatives and vision.

Sinoti Samoa has nineteen Parishes and congregations under its care. Each parish and congregation is linked to one of six regions: Auckland, Manukau, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Taranaki and Wellington.

The current Sinoti executive officers are:

Superintendent	Rev Suiva'aia Te'o
Secretary	Itamua Mataiva D Robertson
Treasurer	Tuatagaloa Saunoa Tulou

Sinoti Samoa held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) from the 10th – 12th August 2018 at the Willow Park Christian Campsite. The AGM Theme was "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it". On Thursday 9th August the Ministerial Synod met while the Sinoti Samoa National Youth leaders also held Youth Leadership training for the youth representatives from throughout Sinoti in attendance.

On Friday 10th, the Christian Education committee, Mafutaga Tamaitai (MWF) Executive and Sinoti Youth representatives held further meetings during the day before the Sinoti AGM was officially opened in devotion, led by the Sinoti Superintendent and the Auckland Samoan Region Lay Preachers Association. During this official opening ceremony we paid tribute to all those who had passed away since our previous AGM: Akaka Atoni Alaelua Thomson, Aliitasi Foisa, Peseta Ron Collinette, Ana Mele Brewster, Lau Urima Semisi Tyrell, Feo Isaako Fa'afoina Matatia, Moafagatau Silika Tuifao Tautai-Lologa, Ufie Poiva Matautia, Fa'ato'a Omeke Tulaga, Su'a Fualau Tupu, Levaea Uili, Suefuaina Filipo Mulitalo.

Sinoti elections for the 2019-2022 term was carried out and the new officers will be:

Superintendent	Rev Suiva'aia Te'o
Secretary	Toleafoa Tuimauga
Treasurer	Tuatagaloa Saunoa Tulou
National Youth Leaders:	Setu Pio & Janice Auva'a

At this annual meeting Sinoti paid tribute and acknowledged Itamua Mataiva Robertson. Itamua Mataiva's time as Sinoti secretary ends in January 2019, and we give thanks to God for her faithful service to Sinoti during her 6 years as Sinoti Secretary. We wish her well with her responsibilities with the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. We acknowledged also the outgoing National Youth Leaders Miss Tumema Faioso and Mr Lusua Taloafulu who also officially complete their term of service in January 2019. Sinoti acknowledged Mrs Olive Tanielu who was elected at the recent South Pacific Area Seminar held in Fiji to be Area President of the South Pacific Women's Fellowship 2021-2026. She will be commissioned at the 14th World Assembly in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2021.

Let the Children Live

Each congregation have ongoing programmes based on the 10 year vision. Activities ranging from swimming lessons, family fun days, homework centres and play groups to name a few.

The Sinoti Samoa Social Issues Committee continue running a number of workshops throughout all our regions in relation to Family Violence and Suicide prevention. At the recent AGM, Sinoti passed a resolution that ALL Sinoti Samoa events will be smokefree starting in Jan 2019.

Workshops

Sexuality Workshop

This was a difficult topic to discuss within Sinoti, due to its sensitive nature. However a committee was formed to facilitate this discussion as requested by Conference. To date, we have run sexuality workshops in five regions (with the final one to be carried out in late August) and also within the various groups of the Synod e.g. Youth.

Parish Reviews

First year reviews will be conducted at St Johns Ponsonby, Papatoetoe, St Pauls Otara and Papakura before the end of the year.

Sinoti Samoa's Response to Conference Papers

Evangelical Network – Sinoti acknowledges the ministry of the Evangelical Network and affirms its report to Conference.

Climate Justice – Sinoti strongly affirms the work of the Public Issues Network towards Climate Justice. Parishes have been encouraged to take onboard the suggestions contained within the paper and to keep exploring ways to combat this issue.

Responsible Investment Policy – Sinoti acknowledges the work of Stephen Walker and the committee. Sinoti confirms its support of the contents outlined in the paper but furthermore recommends that Conference consider the following:

- a. That MCNZ refrain from investing in companies that impact (directly or otherwise) on the environment;
- b. That MCNZ withdraw any funds invested in such companies (as outlined above) even if the revenue earned from such investments is less than 5%.

Challenges

The harvest is great but the workers are few. Sinoti Samoa have established an 'inspirational team' and a 'candidacy team' who will look at ways to develop potential leaders for ministerial vocation. Sinoti's visioning committee are currently working on a 5 year strategy to ensure each Parish has a Presbyter and how to sustain this important ministry.

Sinoti continue to fundraise for its building project 'Tafa o ata'. We are extremely grateful to MCPC for their guidance and assistance. We have been fortunate also to benefit from the expertise of various Sinoti Samoa members who have offered their skills (in the areas of architecture, construction and engineering) towards this project. We pray that in the very near future our dream shall become a reality.

May God guide us all as we continue His ministry.

VAHEFONUA TONGA O AOTEAROA

The Connexion is always blessed between and during conferences and Vahefonua Tonga is grateful for all the blessings, outcomes and also the challenges it has met on its journey. We acknowledge the partnerships between Te Taha Maori and Taiuiwi.

Ministry

The Vahefonua Tonga Ministry is based on its collective understanding of Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible. The Sunday School has performed well equipping children and families with Biblical learning tools and laying good foundation for their faith journey. The first half of the year is utilised in the "Faka-Me (May Festivals)" Celebration encompassing Biblical Drama, Poetry, Music, Recitals and all sorts of performances and cultural activities. The second half of the year is spent on teaching the curriculum and exams by the end of the lectionary year or before beginning of the Advent Season.

There are always a good number of people responding to their calls to candidate for ordained ministry within Vahefonua Tongan or English Speaking synods. Vahefonua Tonga at this stage is unable to meet all the presbyterial needs of congregations.

The Daily Devotion (Falengameesi Resource Book) based on the Revised Common Lectionary readings is a very helpful tool. All age activities, programmes and guides for groups such as Wesley Classes, Women's Fellowship, Evangelism, Youth, Sunday School, Lay Preachers, Radio, Elderly, Young Parents, Choirs and Brass Bands, Camping and Fasting programmes etc are guided by the Falengameesi Resource Book. Alter-calls at the end of the month service is encouraged and is certainly a climax of each camp.

Lay ministry and hard work of Congregation and Parish Stewards are very vital support in both ways for the parishioners and ministers. We are grateful for the great leadership of ministers and their wives or husbands, their sacrifices in always walking the second mile.

We are desperate to have affordable parsonages in Palmerston North, Dunedin, Tauranga, Pukekohe and some other towns or cities. It is sad that parsonage or church building needs of Vahefonua Tonga congregations are of low priority to other parishes and synods' strategies and developments which would rather sell churches or parsonages because of other interests.

There are multimillion dollar projects of churches, halls and parsonages to be built or bought and they are homes and villages to our children, young people and families.

There is still a very strong link between the Vahefonua Tonga and the Conference of the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga.

Mission

The Vahefonua Tonga Methodist Mission Charitable Trust commonly known as SIAOLA together with many of its congregations deliver its Mission. The establishment of SIAOLA and programmes of congregations since 2006 is the active response of Vahefonua Tonga to challenges and issues

of Poverty, Domestic and Street Violence, Truancy and Bullying, all Types and Forms of Abuse, Drugs and Alcohol, Unemployment, Suicide, Low or Underachievement in Education, Language and Culture, Health and Safety, Housing, Gambling and so on and so forth.

SIAOLA currently has one staff member an Executive Director (Kathleen Tuai-Ta'ufo'ou) who does everything from cleaning to executive responsibilities. Siaola is very fortunate that it has volunteers from 2006 and more now and are still going strong. It delivers three main programmes, Strong Family - Famili Va-lelei, Well Educated Family – Famili Ako Lelei, Healthy Family – Famili Mo'ui Lelei.

There are six Tongan Early Childhood Centres operating under Auckland-Manukau Parish, and one jointly with Lifewise. There are 5 Laulotaha (Mentoring) of 4 in Auckland and one in Wellington. There is also an Education Sunday (normally the 3rd Sunday in January) which acknowledges the achievers and emphasize the importance of Education and Training. Many congregations run their own Homework and educational initiatives.

Many congregations have their own Health Initiatives and have contracts with their local DHB encouraging Vegetable Gardening and Nutrition, exercises and healthy lifestyle. Rev Hiueni Nuku CEO of the Porirua Union Health is the convener of the Health committee. Congregations have good working relationships with DHBs and other Health providers. There are many nurses, doctors, professionals and health care workers who help in areas or health related matters.

The Famili Vā Lelei programme is running well. The team visits congregations as needed. They are invited to camps during Easter and Labour Weekends. It runs camps for 6 or 7 families each time in which volunteer professionals facilitate the programmes. This is a unique programme because children are included. Attendants and Completion of the programmes are 100%. More than 40 families which include more than 100 children have completed the programmes.

Vahefonua Tonga has Home Investment initiative known as GREI. Through this initiative 9 families have bought their own home between July 2017 to June 2018. From July 2018 to December 2018 it is anticipated that about 11 more families will be buying their own homes.

Vahefonua Tonga acknowledges that there are always rooms for improvements in its mission and ministry. More information may be read in www.siaola.org

Acknowledgements

The award of New Zealand Order of Merit to Valeti Finau for her contribution to Education, and Pacific Community and Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune for her contribution to the Pacific Community are acknowledged. The Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune's appointment as President of the Methodist Church of New Zealand is a joy for us all, and also the appointment of Siniva Vaitohi as President of the Methodist Women Fellowship.

We are grateful for all the assistance and support from President Rev Prince Devanandan and Viv Whimster and also the General Secretary Rev David Bush, the Rev Trevor Hoggard and Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune for their leadership and also Tumuaki Rev Diana Tana and Te Taha Maori. It is a delight to acknowledge the support that all synods in which there are Tongan congregations worshipping with local congregations.

WASEWASE KO VITI KEI ROTUMA

We wish to acknowledge the Tauwiwi, Mission Resourcing and the Connexional for your continuous support and prayers with great appreciation.

Highlights

1. Long Term Plan / Achieved

Wasewase ko Viti achieved in 8 years what was planned for 10 years in:

- Successfully completed the first five years of Wasewase ko Viti kei Rotuma as a Synod on 16 March 2018.

- Successfully established total of six Tabacakacaka, stationing a Presbyter in each including Rev Peni and probationer presbyter.
- Been a year of adjustment, movements and settling down.

2. Next 5 To 10 Year Plan / Future Focus

- Stipended Presbyters [half to full time].
- Parsonages for Presbyters and their families.
- Two further candidates going through interview process for Ministry and full time study at Trinity College.
- Strong financial position for the development of Wasewase.
- Encouraging the flow of important matters that may arise from Parishes quarterly meetings to the Synod Superintendent

EVANGELICAL NETWORK

The Evangelical Network has been around for nigh on 18 years.

It was birthed out of a deep sense of betrayal at the Conference's inability to deliver on its promised Evangelical Synod, subsequent to the acceptance of Rev David Bromell into full connexion. The suspension of the consensus process which brought David into full connexion did not extend to the forming of the Evangelical Synod, hence its formation foundered. The Evangelical Network was offered as a way forward.

Upon reflecting on the EN and its place in the church, the safeguards that are in place, and the very nature of the church itself, it has become clear to me that this Network, as a legal entity designed to 'protect' evangelicals, has passed its usefulness. It is now simply a reminder of a painful time in our history, and its very existence implies that the white Tauwi church is still polarised over the issues of human sexuality. At a leadership level I do not believe this to be the case. There are undoubtedly congregations for which the issues of human sexuality are live ones. There are more than sufficient checks in the system to ensure that 'inappropriate' appointments are not made – on the basis of sexuality anyway. In my view it is not the 'Evangelicals' that need protecting.

To remove the Evangelical Network from our statutes would require little effort, as it appears in our law book with very little substance, in only a few places, and could easily be deleted.

Conference 2018 in Christchurch presents us an opportunity to draw a line under the Evangelical Network. We acknowledge how it has served us in the past, providing a sense of psychic safety for those for whom it was important. In order that others could also know that freedom, that they have nothing to fear except our good will ☺, we lay it down with no strings attached, and no expectation of any kind of reciprocal action or gesture. There is little to be served by continuing with our silo mentality. We need to recognise that we're all in this together.

Suggested decisions:

1. The report be received
2. That Conference acknowledges the contribution to the life of the church of the Evangelical Network over the 18 years of its existence.
3. That Conference recognises that the Evangelical Network has fulfilled its function, is no longer necessary, and ceases to exist from this Conference.
4. That the Law Revision Committee be asked to bring proposed changes deleting the Evangelical Network from the Law book to Conference 2020.
5. That the assets of the Evangelical Network be transferred to the General Account of the Methodist Church.

NEW ZEALAND METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Biennial Report for the Year ending 31 July, 2018

As we conclude our term of office on 28 October, the National Executive of the Methodist Women's Fellowship, have pleasure in presenting this report.



Our Christchurch team is Dianne Claughton President, Lynne Scott Vice President and World Federation Correspondent, Philomena Petaia Secretary, Valmai Horlor Treasurer and Uniting Congregations Link, Roz Wilkie Liaison and Cultural Link, Rev Barbara Peddie Chaplain and Diaconate Link, Ofa Giblin and Unaisi Tikoinaka Missions and Moe Petaia National Council of Women. It has been a privilege to represent our members.

Our theme "Chosen People Called to Proclaim" from our World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women has become a reality and through bi-monthly newsletters every member has been encouraged to share their personal faith stories proclaiming our motto "To know Christ and make Him Known". I have featured a Chosen Women from the Bible, the world or New Zealand every time.

Our Aims are: To unite members in prayer, study, fellowship and service, encouraging them to make a Christian witness in home, church and community.

To support the work of Methodist and Uniting churches.

To encourage an informed interest in worldwide missions and evangelism.

We have shared in the loss of valued members and friends. We have shared the pleasure for those who have received honours and the opportunities to attend Seminars overseas and to further studies. We have all enjoyed our "Touchstone" stories. We give thanks to God for the lives and witnesses of these precious girls and women.

Eighty eight of us participated with four hundred South Pacific area sisters in Fiji in July and the theme was "Chosen People Called to Proclaim with Hearts on Fire". Our World Federation President Alison Judd from England was there and Mataiva Robertson our World Secretary and Leu Pupulu our World Treasurer. It was good news to learn that Olive Tanielu will be the next Area President after our next World assembly in Sweden in August 2021. New Zealand MWF continues to be well represented on the World Executive.

We continue to send Smethurst funding to the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga to help with the Seminar registrations. We also send funding to the World Federation to support other Units and the Helen Kim Scholars.

Some of our groups are small but all appreciate the love and support of each other and feel truly blessed to belong to groups where friendships are strong. We are grateful for those who take on the leadership roles and I thank every member for their support.

We have visited seven of our nineteen districts and have many memorable experiences. Thanks for your uplifting sharing, fun and laughter. Please pray for our two newest groups at Mt Albert and Rotorua. The work being done in our churches, our districts and the world is invaluable and we thank each church for their continued support.

I was pleased to attend the Presbyterian Women of New Zealand annual assembly and we will continue to have a close relationship with them.

Missions has always held a high profile and we have continued to offer support in many ways locally and nationally. Last year we supported a Christian World Service project in Nicaragua raising \$22,067.15 and the New Zealand Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder raising \$6620.15.

This year “Children are our Hope and our Future” are supporting a Christian World Project in South Uganda and the New Zealand Pillars Organisation.

We continue to save stamps and have raised \$1397.65 for the Kokeqolo Project in the Solomon Islands and a Missions fund raised \$1872 for a Fijian Orphanage in Ba.

Our next National Projects are a Christian World Project in Fiji and supporting Bellyful. Every year the Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa New Zealand also share these Mission Initiatives.

We continue to support the Fellowship of the Least Coin, World Day of Prayer, Let the Children Live Projects in our communities, our own church needs, our two Helen Kim scholars, National Council of Women and Pacific Women’s Watch based in Auckland. Please encourage the young women in your congregations to support these too. I was privileged to attend the Suffrage 125 Celebration at Government House, Wellington remembering Kate Sheppard and the support of Methodist women in the 1880s.

We support our local Deacons and I was pleased to attend this year’s Convocation. We also support the students of Trinity College. All are very grateful for the correspondence they receive. We have Associate members who cannot attend our meetings and we visit our older members.

Our three Grant and Scholarship Funds – Smethurst, Kurahuna and Friendship continue to enable women of all ages to further their education here and overseas. Thank-you to those serving on these three committees.

We held our Council meeting at the Gardens Hotel Complex, Christchurch in September, 2017 with forty leaders and our Convention will take place there at the end of October.

The next National Executive from the Tongan District – Feohi’anga’a Fafine Metotisi Niu Sila will be inducted led by the new President Siniva Vaitohi from South Auckland. Please pray for this new team taking on these roles for the first time.

We acknowledge that the membership of our European members is declining and we continue to encourage them to invite newcomers to join them. Our Pasifika groups continue to inspire us all and we are encouraged by the enthusiasm of our young women.

As we come to the end of our term as the National Executive we thank you all for the many prayers and messages of support and encouragement that we have received.

God bless you all richly as you continue to be chosen people called to proclaim. 1 Peter: 2 9 – 10.

Suggested decision:

1. That the report be received.