

## **Rev. Arthur W. Dickie 1927-2013**

Malo e lelei! Bula vinaka! Kia ora tatou! It's a real privilege to be asked to speak today as we gather to give thanks to God for the life of Arthur Dickie.

Catherine, Mark, Andrew, Elizabeth, Anne and Alice, I bring with me today the love and prayers of the members of the Waikato-Waiariki Synod and of the wider Methodist church. We feel for your loss; we share with you our deep sense of sadness at Arthur's death; we offer you the gifts of our hearts, our support and our prayers. May the God of consolation bless us all with courage, hope and the peace that passes all understanding!

I want to pay tribute today to Arthur's ministry and to honour him as someone who combined service to the church, the community and the factory floor.

Arthur spent most of his ministry in rural and small-town parishes in this Synod. His first appointment in 1954 was to Ohura: a place of legend where many great ministries have begun. He went on to serve at Whakatane and Kawerau, Waihi and Paeroa and after his retirement took up supply appointments at Hamilton East, Whangamata and Ngaruawahia. It takes a special person to minister in the rural setting where people's lives are grounded in the realities of earth and rain and sunshine. In all of these appointments Arthur and Cath developed warm pastoral relationships with local people; Arthur was a great encourager who felt most at home when helping others. Throughout these years Arthur was also involved in a number of building projects around the District, drawing on his eight years of training as an engineering draughtsman.

Those years in ministry were punctuated by two significant periods in Arthur's life. The first began in 1960 when because of back problems Arthur was forced to withdraw from full-time ministry. This led him to resume his career as an engineer and he worked at the paper mill in Kawerau and with the Standards Association of New Zealand in Wellington. Work-wise this was a satisfying time marked by professional advancement and Arthur qualified for membership of the Institution of Professional Engineers of New Zealand, an achievement he was always justly proud of. However the call to serve God remained strong and wherever he went Arthur continued to offer ministry both in the workplace and the local church. This experience gave him an appreciation of the role of the worker priest, one who offers Christ's ministry in the everyday world of the ordinary worker.

The second very significant period in Arthur's life began in 1985 when he accepted an invitation from the United Church of Christ (USA) to serve with congregations in White Salmon, Washington State and Cascade Locks, Oregon State. This eight-year appointment was one of the highlights of Arthur's ministry and one he often talked about. In many respects I think he found a greater freedom to be himself in the American church; people were more willing to experiment and take some risks. The appointment was highly successful bringing all sorts of new programmes and ministries to two rather depressed congregations. While in the States Arthur also had the opportunity to reflect on the place of small churches in America and New Zealand. His writings on that subject are still highly relevant and insightful and well-worth reading today.

Arthur retired in 1992 but continued to offer supply ministries until 2001. By the time I arrived in the District he was one of the elder statesmen of the Synod, someone with a wealth of experience who shared his wisdom gently and with huge grace. He was a quiet man, always seemed to be dressed in a suit, was serious but had a twinkle in his eye. Both he and Cath were a wonderful support to anyone new; they were always willing to help and often the first people I called when I needed someone to take a service. They knew the ups and downs of ministry and were a great encouragement to those of us following in their footsteps. Arthur was a man who'd experienced difficult times as we all do, but his faith and desire to serve God remained strong and his ministry grew in adversity and flourished in warmth and in grace.

As a Synod, we give thanks for Arthur's life and ministry and pray that he will rest now in the everlasting arms of the God who created him. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Rev. Dr Susan Thompson*  
*Synod Superintendent*