

Malo e lelei! Bula vinaka! Talo fa lava! Kia ora tatou! It's a real privilege to speak today as we gather to give thanks to God for the life of Trevor Shepherd.

My name is Susan Thompson and I'm the Superintendent of the Waikato-Waiariki Methodist Synod. I bring with me today the love and prayers of the members of the Synod and of the wider Methodist Church.

Trevor was someone who had a special place in the life of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Since the year 2010 he had been the Father of the Methodist Conference, a title given to the minister who had served the Church the longest. That was an honour Trevor wore with pride but also with his usual humour and grace. He once spoke to the Synod about his spiritual journey and began by warning us how risky it was to ask older ministers to speak as they often found it hard to keep to their allotted time.

Trevor dedicated his life to Jesus Christ and to the ministry of the church at the age of sixteen. By the time he was nineteen he was preparing to candidate and working as a Home Missionary probationer at Hikurangi.

He entered Trinity Theological College in Auckland in 1943. Theological study didn't come easy, but with "characteristic determination [Trevor] developed disciplined work habits", receiving a prize for the student who had achieved the greatest progress in a year. I actually used his study notes when I did some research on the history of the college. He'd kept them

for all those years; they're covered in underlinings and little notes in the margins in his handwriting.

After a year of probation at Taihape Trevor was appointed to overseas mission work. In 1947 he and his wife Gloria went to the Solomon Islands where they remained for the next ten years. Life wasn't easy in the aftermath of the events of the Second World War but Trevor and Gloria were a great team. They shared the life of the local people and helped them meet the challenges of reconstruction, contributing to the development of a more completely indigenous island church. Trevor told us that his nickname during those years was 'Big Worker'.

Trevor and Gloria returned to New Zealand in 1957 and took up a series of appointments in Oxford, North Canterbury; Bryndwr in Christchurch; Hamilton East and Opotiki. He was equally at home in country and city circuits and developed distinctive gifts as a pastor and preacher. Aspects of ministry which were important to him included the value of friendship, compassion, community involvement, prayer, healing and a deep desire to serve God and the people of God. Looking back on his years in ministry Trevor told us that his aim and focus was always to be like Jesus.

In 1982 Trevor retired from ministry and he and Gloria moved to Tauranga. A new and very rich stage in their lives began, one that was full of the interest and adventure of travel, more time for the family, continuing participation in the local church, St Stephen's, Otumoetai and the gentle loving companionship that comes from spending a lifetime together.

In 2008 the couple moved to Tamahere Eventide Home here in Hamilton where Trevor remained after Gloria's death in 2010.

Over the last three years Trevor remained an active and engaged presence at Tamahere and in the District. He was starting to slow down but still enjoyed coming to Synod events and was often asked to say Grace at meal-times. He always began with the line: "in a world where people are hungry we give thanks for the gift of food". He had the ability to speak to the heart of things.

On one memorable night he shared with us something of his own spiritual journey and told us how he once shook hands with the Pope. When relating that story to the President earlier this year he said that he'd told the Pope he had his policy on birth control wrong! I don't think he actually said it out loud but that was Trevor's sense of humour and his real concern for issues of human well-being.

One particularly special memory I have of Trevor is of a visit where we talked about his time in ministry at Oxford. My mother's family, most of whom are now dead, were farmers at Oxford and I mentioned their name to Trevor. To my amazement although more than sixty years had passed he remembered them. I also discovered that he'd been the one to take the funeral of my uncle who I never met because he was killed as a young man in a plane accident. That connection with a family tragedy brought home to me the immense value of our pastoral relationships which can still have meaning

even after so many years. Trevor's remembering was a mark of the man and it gave me a great gift.

Reflecting on Trevor's ministry, the writer of his retirement tribute noted the way it had influenced the lives of so many both within New Zealand and beyond. Trevor had an ability to identify with people of every kind while always being himself, an irrepressible sense of humour, a practical common sense and a down-to-earth gospel which enriched his ministry and brought many people in touch with the reality of Jesus Christ and their own lives. He served his Lord faithfully and well.

Alys, Graham and Dennis, as a church we give thanks for Trevor's life and ministry. We remember him with affection and gratitude and take comfort today in the words of the psalmist: "I will lay down in peace and take my rest, for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid" (Psalm 4.8). Thanks be to God. Amen.