



METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER - November 2021

A newsletter is not normally produced in the month that MCNZ holds its Conference. Here is a copy of the MME report to Conference 2021.

OUR VISION

“To be church is to be missionary; to be Methodist is to be ecumenical.”

This statement comes from the Strategic Plan of Methodist Mission and Ecumenical affirmed at Conference in 2015. This continues to reflect MM&E’s commitment to the ethos of ecumenical *diakonia* and *koinonia* of the Methodist Church of New Zealand - Te Hāhi Weteriana O Aotearoa.

Our *diakonia* is to promote an understanding of international mission as joining evangelism and ministry to human needs, concern for social justice and for the world. This is represented particularly in mission with the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea; and more broadly in partnership with the ecumenical overseas aid agency Christian World Service, and through our relationships with international ecumenical bodies.

Our *koinonia* is also for mission, to work towards embodying Jesus’ prayer the “they may all be one ... so the world may believe.” (John 17: 21-22) This is expressed internationally in our active membership of international ecumenical bodies, domestically in the National Dialogue for Christian Unity, and in our bilateral dialogues in conjunction with Faith and Order. A specific relationship with Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga i Nga Hāhi O Aotearoa is nurtured directly by Te Taha Māori. Te Taha Māori membership continues to actively serve the Māori ecumenical movement promoting peace, justice and unity.

OVERSEAS MISSION ENGAGEMENT

The Covid-19 pandemic has created difficulties for connecting and engaging with our friends in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The travel restrictions have meant that we have not had the capacity for the acting Director to make the usual visits to the islands, which has meant we have been unable to maintain crucial engagement with our mission partners. In the meantime, we remain committed to our general partnership with the Uniting Church in the Solomon Islands, and the United Church in Papua New Guinea. Our special longstanding direct partnerships continue with Helena Goldie Hospital, Sasamuqa Hospital, Helena Goldie College of Nursing, Tabaka Rural Training Institute, and Goldie College.



Sasamuqa Hospital

No specific annual appeals have been organised for either 2020 to 2021. However, MM&E, in conjunction with a personal donor, supported the fitout of a new visiting doctors’ residence at Sasamuqa Hospital. The residence was dedicated on 21 September 2021, and its first use will be to

accommodate three doctors on tour for Covid 19 awareness and vaccination in Choiseul. Meanwhile MM&E has continued financial support for student nurse training.

The acting Director has engaged conversation with Uniting World, the overseas mission and aid arm of the Uniting Church of Australia regarding their engagement with the Solomon Islands. More particularly, the acting Director is exploring with Christian World Service future partnership opportunities in the Pacific. MM&E seeks to strengthen our overseas mission aid methodology in relation to future projects and partnerships, as well as develop our domestic donor relationships and sources.

A continued interest in international justice and peace issues is maintained particularly for the Korean Peninsula, Tanah Papua (West Papua), and Israel-Palestine.

The Board acknowledges with thanks, the long service of Pauline McKay as National Director of Christian World Service. We wish her well in her retirement and we affirm her work in ecumenical overseas aid and mission. We also acknowledge and welcome the new National Director, Murray Overton.

ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT – NATIONAL

MM&E have been involved in developing relationships with Korean congregations of the Korean Methodist Church (KMC). The acting Director on behalf of the Connexion facilitated a service of celebration to acknowledge and receive into the life of MCNZ three Korean congregations and their pastors (who were received into Full Connexion at Conference 2020). This brings a welcome and distinctive Asian context to the life of Te Hāhi Weteriana, and in particular to the existing partnerships within Tauwiwi. The ongoing intra-Methodist relationship with KMC for its NZ congregations continues.



*Service of welcome and recognition of Korean ministries,
held at Pitt Street Methodist Church, 11 April 2021*

The acting Director was an invited guest at the UCANZ Forum in April 2021. He presented a workshop exploring contemporary ecumenical spirituality, and gave an encouragement of its expression in the cooperating, union and uniting congregations.

The National Dialogue for Christian Unity met in June 2021, postponed from its customary time of February. We celebrate that Society of Friends (“Quakers”) has formally joined as members. The NDCU is engaging projects of:

- developing ‘Receptive Ecumenism’ models for ecumenism in the Aotearoa context;
- exploring new or alternative models for the delivery of education and engagement with ecumenism in adaptation of the previous Schools of Ecumenism formerly run by MM&E.
- continuing the Trilateral Dialogue on the Diaconate (Anglican-Methodist-Roman Catholic), likely for 2022,
- a meeting of the Chairpersons of Bilateral Dialogues and the NDCU Executive,
- learning more of the international Multilateral Collaboration through the Notre Dame Statement (2019) of the Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican and Reformed world communions, living into their common affirmation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ).

MM&E continues to encourage parishes and rohe to participate in local opportunities for cooperation, prayer and worship on an ecumenical and interfaith basis. For example, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, held annually in the Southern Hemisphere between Ascension and Pentecost. The 2021 theme was “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit” (John 15:5-9), based on the international material prepared by the Monastic community of Grandchamp (Switzerland). The 2022 theme is “We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him” (Matthew 2:2), prepared by Middle East Council of Churches based in Beirut, Lebanon.



Ecumenical service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Auckland, June 2021

The World Council of Churches called for a Week of Prayer for COVID 19 Pandemic in March 2021; marking the first anniversary of World Health Organisation’s declaration of the pandemic, to galvanise mutual solidarity and support as we affirm our common human fragility which this pandemic has exposed. MM&E prepared and circulated a resource document, and the Methodist Women’s Fellowship facilitated a week of evening prayer services held on Zoom.

The annual ecumenical Season of Creation, from 1 September to 4 October, is a further ecumenical opportunity through worship, prayer and action particularly in response to a duty of stewardship of our world and to respond to the deep concerns of climate change. The Pacific Council of Churches is a particular source of resources and advocacy pertinent to Pacific concerns from climate change.

Asia Sunday is an initiative of the Christian Conference of Asia, also provides an annual liturgical resource focused on justice and peace concerns of our Asia region.

ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENTS - INTERNATIONAL

The Covid-19 pandemic has understandably impacted on the planning and holding of international ecumenical events, forums and assemblies; many have continued in the online environment, but larger gatherings have tended to be postponed.



The general assembly of Christian Conference of Asia scheduled for 2020 has been postponed, and is hoped to be held in early or mid-2023; in either Thailand or Indonesia. Meanwhile consultations have moved to online formats, with the acting Director has participated in two, and was a resource person to one on HIV-AIDs advocacy.



A CCA consultation based on Zoom



The World Council of Churches general assembly scheduled for 2021 has been postponed to 31 August to 8 September 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany. The theme is “God’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”. Many online webinars and workshops have been organised, and through often held in the small hours of NZ-time, are available via its YouTube platform for viewing.



The Conference of the World Methodist Council intended for August 2021 has also been postponed, until a date to be determined between 2023 and 2025; to be held in Goteborg, Sweden. Tony Franklin-Ross serves as the Chairperson of the Ecumenical Relationships Committee, involving him in international bilateral and multilateral dialogues. Along with David Bush, they service as members of the WMC Steering Committee.



The acting Director has participated in various Pacific Council of Churches Zoom meetings, and with the Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific (through in his capacity with the World Methodist Council). PCC projects and thematic areas are linked to a process of “Rethinking the Household of God in the Pacific”; from which arises a focus of “Reweaving the Ecumenical, Ecological and Economic Mat”.



Online church leaders meeting – Pacific Council of Churches

INTERFAITH

The acting Director has continued connections with the Council of Christians and Muslims (Auckland), the Auckland Interfaith Council, and the Religious Diversity Centre of Aotearoa New Zealand. MM&E encourages the interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace, held annually in the third week of October.

The National Interfaith Forum is next scheduled for 6-8 May 2022, in Tauranga.

ACTING DIRECTOR

Rev Tony Franklin-Ross assumed the role of acting Director as of 1 October 2020; initially on two-third time, then as of 1 February 2021 three-quarter time. This supply appointment has been extended until 1 February 2023.

As of July 2021, MM&E has relinquished holding an office at the MCNZ office building at 409 Great South Road, Ellerslie. The acting Director is working now from a home-based office in central Auckland.

MM&E BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Board notes its gratitude and thanks to Rev Uesifili Unasa, who completes sixteen years as a Board member and serving six years as Chairperson. The Board wishes him well in his new role in the Auckland Synod. The Board welcomes Jackie McGeorge into the role of Chairperson.

CONNEXIONAL MATTERS

During the year, Council of Conference invited Mission Resourcing and Mission & Ecumenical to consider the possibility of merging Boards and responsibilities. The Mission and Ecumenical Board

considered the recommendations by the Council of Conference and agreed the proposed amalgamation of Mission and Ecumenical and Mission Resourcing is not the appropriate nor the best course of action to take at this time.

The 4+4 Process for a new Director was initiated in the beginning of 2021, however the process was put on hold, with the process expected to commence in 2022. In conjunction with this process, the Board will continue to review strategically its vision and purpose, and its continued resourcing including finances to sustain the ongoing vision and work of MM&E.

CELEBRATIONS IN 2022

As the Te Hāhi Weteriana prepares for our bicentenary celebrations in 2022, MM&E will look to explore and examine our ecumenical journey. We celebrate the ethos of ecumenism expressed by Conference 2003, 'To be Methodist is to be ecumenical' and how it might be lived out in our Aotearoa context today and into the future. The bicentenary provides Te Hāhi an opportunity to look back at our Weteriana history and mission, particularly to acknowledge and celebrate the relationships between Māori and Pākehā that established the earliest Wesleyan Mission stations in Tai Tokerau. The ecumenical roots between Mihinare (Anglican), Weteriana (Methodist) and Katorika (Roman Catholic) were nurtured in the early nineteenth-century missions to and with Māori. We recognise our ecumenical journey with the affirmation of our Covenant relationship with the Anglican Church is earthed in this time, as indeed is the story of the Roman Catholic church.

2022 also marks the centenary of Methodist Church of New Zealand's oversight of the missions in the former Solomon Islands District (including Bougainville); as affirmed in the MCNZ Centenary Conference of 1922. MM&E intends to dialogue with Uniting Church of Solomon Islands regarding the centenary, and to explore the basis of ongoing relationships. We hope that there will be opportunities to honour this Centennial of mission partnership, and in particular MM&E invites Conference to mark this Solomon Islands and Bougainville Centenary as a component of the 2022 Conference.

Rev. Uesifili Unasa
Chairperson

Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross
acting Director

MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD

Methodist Church of New Zealand

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