



Methodist Conference 2026

Chaplains Suiva'aia Te'o & Edwin Talakai

Preparations are well underway for the MCNZ Conference to be held at Wesley College in October. The arrangements committee is working faithfully to prepare a gathering that will be welcoming, inspiring and spiritually enriching.

The Conference theme is:
"Maranga! Tula'I! Tu'U Hake! Tucake!
Arise – Be the Light of Christ to All."

These words from the different cultural and language communities of our Church unite us in one call: to arise together as the people of God. The theme is both an invitation and a challenge. It calls us to rise in faith, courage and hope, and to reflect the light of Christ within the Church and throughout our communities. At a time when many people face hardship, division and concern for the future of creation, the Church is called to arise and make Christ's light visible through worship, witness, justice, compassion and service.

Conference begins on Friday 2 October with separate meetings for Tau'iwi and Te Taha Māori. These gatherings provide important opportunities for conversation, discernment and preparation before the whole Conference comes together.

On Saturday, Conference will be formally welcomed to Wesley College with a pōwhiri. This significant Māori welcome will gather us as visitors and hosts, acknowledge the whenua on which we meet, and prepare us to enter the life and work of Conference together in a spirit of respect and unity.

The programme will include worship, Bible reflection, plenary sessions, the induction of the new Presidential Team, celebrations of ministry, business sessions, fellowship and the Covenant Service.

The first plenary session will be led by Vice President-elect Tau'ataina Tupou. Its focus will be **"Maranga in Identity – Called by Christ."** This session will invite Conference to reflect on who we are as followers of Jesus Christ and as the Methodist Church in Aotearoa. Our identity is grounded in God's love and shaped by our calling to live faithfully within the bicultural and multicultural context of our Church and nation.

The second plenary session will be led by President-elect Rev Alisa Lasi. Its focus will be **"Tula'i in Justice – Light for the World."** This session will challenge the Church to stand for justice, listen to voices that are often unheard, and respond courageously to the needs of our communities and world. Christ's light must not be hidden; it is made visible through actions of love, mercy, reconciliation and justice.

The third plenary session will be led by the Presidential team. Its focus will be **“Tu’u Hake in Taiao – Healing the Earth.”** This session will invite Conference to recognise the care of creation as an essential part of Christian discipleship. As people sent by God, we are called to protect the earth, respond courageously to climate change, and stand alongside communities most affected by environmental harm. It will also be an opportunity to recommit ourselves to Christ and to Rekindle the Vā of Papātu’anuku.

A joyful and historic moment will be the induction of Rev Alisa Lasi and Tau’atina Tupou as the first Pasifika Presidential Team of our Church. This is a significant occasion, not only for our Pasifika communities, but for the whole Methodist Church. To mark the occasion, Rev Suiva’aia Te’o has written a new Conference song honouring the first Pasifika Presidential Team. The song reflects the Conference theme and celebrates the call to arise and shine with the light of Christ. It will be sung at both the Induction and Covenant Services.

Conference will celebrate one person being ordained and one person being received into Full Connexion. We will also recognise and honour 14 ministers who are retiring, giving thanks for their many years of faithful ministry, leadership and service. In another sacred moment, Conference will pay tribute to and remember all those who have died between Conference 2025 and Conference 2026. We will honour their lives, give thanks for their witness and service, and commend them to the eternal love and care of God. This time of remembrance will also acknowledge the grief of their families, congregations and communities.

We are delighted to welcome six overseas guests representing the Methodist Churches of Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. Observers will also join us from Australia and from within Aotearoa New Zealand. Their presence reminds us that we belong to a wider Methodist family and share in God’s mission across the Pacific and beyond.

Hospitality will be an important part of Conference. The Saturday evening Hākari, or Conference Dinner, will be hosted by Vahefonua Tonga, with entertainment and cultural presentations from different communities of our Church. Lunches, morning and afternoon teas will be hosted by Sinoti Samoa, Wasewase Koviti Kei Rotuma and Northern Synod. Music will enrich our worship and celebrations through choirs and brass bands from Waikato-Waiariki, Vahefonua Tonga and the Mission Choir from Sinoti Samoa.

As Conference Chaplains, our role has involved working closely with the Presidential Team and Arrangements Committee to help shape the spiritual life of Conference. This includes preparing devotions, prayers, reflections and worship, contributing to the Covenant Service, and Ordination Service and offering pastoral and spiritual support throughout the gathering.

As October approaches, we invite the whole Church to pray for Conference: for wisdom in our conversations, grace in our decisions, joy in our fellowship and courage to respond to God’s call.



One Archivist's Soapbox

Katherine Doig, National Archivist MCNZ

In light of the current political climate in Aotearoa, and with the General Election almost upon us, I take this opportunity to reflect upon Ōtāhuhu Methodism's most famous son, the late David Lange.

In 2024 I wrote about the chance discovery of a Māngere East Methodist Church parish minute book entry detailing with pride David Lange's 1984 landslide electoral victory along with a newspaper clipping reporting on the election outcome.

In the newspaper article, Lange stated that his election as Prime Minister meant that "ordinary people don't have to live in fear anymore...[they] are not at risk of having their living standards attacked, while people who don't need it get a lot more than they need." It is clear from the archives that we hold here detailing Lange's rich immersion in Methodism from infancy, that his own political convictions, and those of the Labour Party more widely at that time, owed more to Methodism than to Marxism – a fact that Lange himself acknowledged publicly, and which Conference memorialised in the official tribute following his premature death at the age of 63, in August 2005.

I was born in the early 1980s, and David Lange is the first Prime Minister that I recall. With hindsight I realise, he was the first person who exemplified for me the attributes that someone worthy of that title should *always* have. Namely, a strong social conscience and moral compass, the ability and will to see, hear, and fight for better conditions for those who are less fortunate and less privileged than oneself, and to be able to do so with strength, courage, and integrity. I've been especially interested in discovering the archives in our collection that document the visit of Lange's UK mentor Lord Donald Soper to Aotearoa in 1985, which offer a tantalising glimpse into the ethos that shaped his political actions while in office – notably his ardent faith, his pacificism, and his socialism.

Soper's wise words to Lange during that timely visit in 1985, encouraging him to hold the line on his government's strong anti-nuclear stance, despite the ANZUS crisis that it had precipitated, echo strongly to me now in September 2026, when members of the current coalition government have not found the collective courage to stand alongside the UK and impose sanctions on Israel.

Soper warned Lange then that "Politicians may come to believe that what is politically expedient is moral." I think these are words that some of the politicians enjoying the highest levels of office in Aotearoa currently very desperately need to hear and to heed.

I was deeply saddened and angered, though not at all surprised, to read of the contempt shown by members of the coalition government to Hamish Jarvie (acting on behalf of the Methodist Alliance) and to Pauline McKay and Garth Nowland-Foreman (acting on behalf of Durham Street Methodist Church), when they presented their oral submissions against David Seymour's Regulatory Standards Bill to the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee last year.

As I watch our public hospitals disintegrate, our grocery prices rise beyond belief, our young people fleeing the country, our incredible and devoted care workers losing the most basic of their entitlements, my wonderful ex-colleagues across the public service losing their jobs, our arts and cultural heritage institutions being systematically decimated, Te Tiriti being trampled upon, our environment being sold off, our elderly being deserted, and our many homeless people being persecuted at the hands of the current government – and this list is just the tip of the iceberg - I hope desperately for a positive change in November.

Dare we imagine that the morning after the election, there will be words from a new Prime Minister-elect, akin to Lange's own on 15 July 1984, emphasising a new back to basics approach that privileges the wellbeing of all New Zealanders, not just that of a very privileged few - "We're going to bring government down to have meaning for people. Parliament won't be a bear pit!" I for one, dearly hope so.



AROUND THE CONNEXION

Growing Church, Ministry and Skills in the Orchards

It has been almost two years since Western Bay of Plenty parish engaged a pastoral support worker Viliame Naliva for the Fijian RSE workers in the kiwifruit orchards in the Western Bay of Plenty area. He reports on this valuable ministry.

In March, most of the 15 groups of workers from Fiji arrived for the start of the winter season work which was mainly kiwifruit picking. Most of them have been here several times so the new arrivals received excellent support.

This was a very busy time for me. I was able to visit most of those groups at least two times each month, and during enjoyable sessions, the workers shared stories about what they did when they returned home last year, and they reflected on how RSE work has impacted their lives. Stories were about families mainly, and how the money saved was being used; for children being able to go to school and play sports, houses being built, extended or repaired, vehicles being purchased for family transport or to be hired, and boats purchased for transport and/or harvesting seafood.

In June several groups returned to Fiji when the picking season came to an end. There was a general consensus that the workers would prefer longer term contracts, and they were encouraged to approach their employers with this request. By the time they left, some of them were assured that they would be employed for a longer term in the new season. For the groups that remain here, there is work in the pack houses, sorting, refrigerating, packing and repacking fruit. There has also been some work in the orchards, cleaning up and pruning the vines in preparation for the new fruit. In the coming months there will be additional employment tending to the plants. As they become more confident in the work they do, some graduate to operating machinery in the orchards and packing sheds.

Before coming to work in the kiwifruit industry, these young people would be mainly engaged in market gardening in Fiji, growing vegetables for their family's consumption and for selling in the markets. Some worked in the fishing industry and others were employed in kava cultivation. Now they cherish the opportunity to learn new skills that mark a new development in their lives.



AROUND THE CONNEXION



Celebrating 150 years of Methodism in Hāwera, South Taranaki

Rev Michael Lemanu

It was a joy and honour to recently celebrate the momentous occasion of 150 years of Methodism in Hāwera, South Taranaki, following more than two years of thoughtful planning and preparation.

A combined regional Karakia brought together *Te Whānau Weteriana o Taranaki* – the Connexional network of Methodist/CV Union Parishes in the Taranaki region – as well longtime friends and families with historical ties to one of the Connexion's oldest parishes.

The Hāwera Methodist Parish is unique in many ways. For one, it has always had a historically strong connection shared between Māori and Tauīwi alike. This has been reflected in many different ways, shapes and forms. From missionary encounters and meaningful Māori tupuna of the early Methodist movement like Rev Robert Tahupotiki Haddon, to Tauīwi Presbyters pioneering the early bicultural journey like the late Rev Len Willing, to the current day where the site is under the stewardship of Te Taha Māori Property Trust.

There remains a worshipping Tauīwi Parish which sees the Lower North Island Synod and the Taranaki Rohe working intentionally together, and sharing office space. Deep partnership, which is not about always seeing things the same, but rather committing to journeying together, has long embodied what Methodism looks like in this part of the country. There is still much more to be done towards this hope, but it is a privilege to be able to work in such a way thus far.

Honouring this ongoing story in our celebrations was crucial in the work undertaken. Members from across the region made their way to Hāwera – including a busload from North Taranaki – and we were also joined by the Local MP, Carl Bates and Phil Nixon, Mayor of South Taranaki.

The service concluded with a rousing rendition of Charles Wesley's *Love Divine* in the four different languages, then everyone proceeded to the Wesley Hall, for food, and fellowship. It was a tremendous blessing to be part of an occasion in our region which invited us to look back on the work God has done through faithful servants, whilst at the same time, commit ourselves again to the task of continued responsiveness to the Spirit's voice.

We are grateful to have been part of a memorable moment in time for the history of Wesley Methodist Church Hāwera. We give thanks to God that there are still more stories yet to be written in the next 150 years and beyond and continue the discerning work of discovering what this will look like as we commit to moving forward together.



Mornington Methodist Church looks to the future at its 150th Anniversary

Rev Adam Baker

Music, education and a dedicated congregation have been defining characteristics of Dunedin's Mornington Methodist Parish throughout its history. The parish recently celebrated 150 years of service and worship.

Methodist worship in the Mornington suburb of Dunedin began in the early 1860s in the homes of settlers in the expanding suburb. In 1874, it became evident that a church needed to be built in the rapidly extending district and so in 1875 a deposit of £20 was placed on a site in the District of Mornington. A Building Committee was established, and tenders sought for constructing the building. The Church was opened on 10 September 1876 with services conducted by Revs A.R. Fitchett in the morning, Dr Stuart in the afternoon, and the Rev Lees of Arrowtown in the evening.

By the end of the 19th century, after just 20 years, the church roll had reached 100, stretching the building to its limit. In response, a section on the other side of the street was purchased, and a new brick church opened on 5 February 1905. A hall was added in 1931. By the 1980s the second church had problems with rising damp and required remedial strengthening. In 1982 the second church was demolished, allowing for the construction of the current Church building that opened in September 1984.

Music has always played an important role at Mornington with a choir in place for over 130 years. The internationally renowned hymnologist Colin Gibson was Mornington organist for over 60 years and choir master for over 40 years. Education has also continued to be a focus of the Church with it offering an Open Education Programme of community talks for many years, recently renamed the Gibson Memorial talks.

Over the weekend 11-13 September 2026 we celebrated 150 years since the opening of the first Methodist Church in Mornington, starting with a concert featuring singers and musicians from within the congregation and wider Dunedin. On Saturday afternoon a meet-and-greet afternoon tea in the Church Lounge was followed by a celebration dinner.

At a Service of Celebration on Sunday our church was full to overflowing with MCNZ leaders, present members, past members and members of the wider Dunedin Parish. A central theme of the weekend, was our need to move forward into the future. Everyone who attended the anniversary was given a card on which they were asked to write a memory of the Church, but also, importantly, a hope for the future. Those responses will be carefully considered as we plan for the next chapter of living out our faith through Methodism in Mornington.



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Doing Church Differently

David McGeorge, General Manager Villages

Starting work at Tamahere Eventide Home and Hospital was like a breath of fresh air following 35 years working for the ANZ Bank. At the bank, every day was spent maximising return to shareholders.

How it changes when you work for the Church and your entire world starts revolving around making peoples'

lives better. As a lifelong Methodist I had always taken my faith with me to work, however, now my work and my faith were interwoven in a complete way. I found that my new working life was doing Church differently. I am proud of the work we do every day at Eventide. The way we approach business by being people centric not just because it is good for the bottom line, but because caring for others becomes a way of life for all of us working on our three sites. In our statements to the world, we emphasise that we are creating a home for each resident and it is a privilege for us to come and serve them in their home. We are creating Church, rather than business, daily and that is a big part of our success; Gospel led rather than financial return led.

How does our business of being Church for our residents manifest itself? Firstly, we are in the minority of institutions in the aged care and retirement village industry that offer Chaplaincy for its people. Not just the residents; for our three chaplains give pastoral support to all who are connected here; residents, staff, contractors and families. It is a big parish that we offer care and support to. Secondly, we do not put money ahead of mission. Our Occupation Rights Agreement (ORA) allows a sharing of the capital gain at the end of the occupancy. Residents receive the sales price from their villa or apartment when it is sold, less any fees relating to the preparation of the property for sale and our management fee (capped at a maximum of 20 percent of the sale price). This ensures that residents keep their housing capital in line with the housing market over time and can control their own options as they age. This gives them dignity.

Thirdly, we attract a larger share of Church people – residents and staff alike – than most other facilities. Not just Christian but people of faith. People are attracted to live, work and offer their services to us because we proudly display who we are, an outreach of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The idea that the Trust retains the surpluses and uses them in the business to further its aims gives a clear message that we are different. Reinvesting in the operation has seen us grow to a point where we are improving the buildings in the care facility both for the residents and for the staff. Giving people pride in what we are creating is part of our different Church.

Lastly, we are careful in how we run our business, where possible, using local contractors who share our values. Fellow people of faith who run their own operations in an ethical way following a people first model of operation. Loyal contractors appreciate our business practices; when our hospital was completed at Tamahere Eventide we were gifted a beautiful cross, crafted from timber recycled from the building. Communion occurs in life when we break bread together and share what we have. Our commitment to creating a better place for people to live out their years is expressed in our mission statement: *"To provide a quality caring service for older people, in a Christian environment."*



Remembering is an Act of Discipleship *Rev Keita Hotere*

He Whakaaroaro invites Te Taha Māori members to ask difficult questions. What will we do with the legacy of leadership we have inherited?

As we gather at Conference to remember those who have died and honour those retiring from active service, we are confronted by more than memories. We are confronted by lives that have shaped the Church and a responsibility to carry their work forward. One generation receives, embodies, and then passes on what it has been given.

Collective memory is not simply what one generation chooses as to preserve and represent. Meaningful service requires us to learn from our mistakes. It also requires us to allow the stories, sacrifices, and witness of those who came before us to shape the decisions we make today. If we do not remember well, we risk losing the narratives of how we came to be. We also fail to learn the lessons of the past.

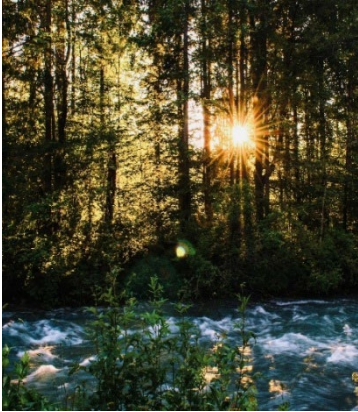
Tangihanga reminds us of this simple truth. At tangihanga, lives are laid before whānau and friends with honesty and humility. Stories are shared, and the past revealed. Many from across the Connexion gathered at Weraroa Marae to farewell Sharon Te Mangu Tito. She was our Te Taha Māori Office Administrator and known for the genuine care she extended to people. Many also, gathered at Te Tokanganui-a-noho marae to farewell Barney Winikerei, a respected kaumātua. He was the staunch advocate for the wellbeing of his communities, and as a Minita-a-iwi his ministry spanned the decades and reached beyond Waikato - Te Rohe Pōtae Rohe.

At Conference, we will gather to hear from retirees whose service also leaves a lasting mark on the Church, including Ex-Presidential team Rev Tovia Aumua and Tumuaki Rev Dr Arapera Ngaha. For me, David Letele's phrase, 'the scars of service,' captures something of their witness. Their witness is grounded in the lived realities of their communities. It reminds us that service leaves its mark not only on ministers but also on their whānau.

We must continue to reflect intentionally on the lives of those who have woven the threads that bind our communities together. Their contributions continue to shape who we are. These are the communities they nurtured, the struggles and burdens they carried, and the people they encouraged. Their example challenges others to step forward with the same commitment and faithfulness.

Christian traditions are rooted in remembrance. Remembering is not just nostalgia. It is an act of discipleship. To remember truthfully is to allow ourselves to be changed by the witness of those who have gone before us. The task before the Church is clear. The witness of one generation becomes a blessing to the next only when it is received, lived, and shared. In this way, it inspires faithful action in those who follow.

Mā wai rā e taurima te marae i waho nei? Mā te tika mā te pono me te aroha e.



In Memory of & with Deep Gratitude

Rev Dr Mary Caygill

September saw me immersed in thought and reflection on the Season of Creation. We pause, in an intentional celebration of prayer and action to protect our – God's – common home.

I greatly value this intentional gift of time and focus, from 1 September – 4 October aware of this shared common purpose with the global Christian family. Amid this year's Season of Creation has come the death of two significant global figures, who over their lifetime advocated for the

protection of the created environment.

Wendell Berry 5 August 1934 – 31 August 2026.

American novelist, poet, essayist, environmental activist, cultural critic and Kentucky farmer.

Annie Dillard 30 April 1945 – 15 September 2026.

American writer of fiction and non-fiction, poet, essayist, cultural critic, university teacher – Wesleyan University.

Their contributions as artists, writers, poets, prophets, have been pivotal to not only my own personal and spiritual formation over the years, but to countless others, world-wide. My inner and outer worlds were expanded and challenged through their words and witness. Both taught and challenged me to love the living world with all its beauties and terrors and as the revealer of the divine. I pay tribute to them in the offering of some of their own written words.

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world and am free."

Wendell Berry, from *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*.

"After the one extravagant gesture of creation in the first place, the universe has continued to deal exclusively in extravagances, flinging intricacies and colossi down aeons of emptiness, heaping profusions on profligacies with ever-fresh vigour. The whole show has been on fire from the word go. I come down to the water to cool my eyes. But everywhere I look I see fire; that which isn't flint is tinder, and the whole world sparks and flames."

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Rest in peace Annie Dillard and Wendell Berry.

**'Arise and Shine for the Glory of God is Upon You'****Isaiah 60:1****Moe Petaia**

The 15th World Assembly of Methodist and Uniting Church Women officially opened on 25 August 2026 with a powhiri and welcoming addresses from Methodist & Uniting Church leaders.

The South Pacific Area President Olive Amani Tanielu, MCNZ President Te Aroha Rountree and the New Zealand Unit President Judith Herbert addressed the delegation as more than 600 women gathered in prayerful service to begin the events of the Assembly.

Wednesday agenda saw the start of the presentation of reports and provided an opportunity for the women to engage in various workshops and to weave around the market and purchase some of the incredible goods offered by the various fellowships.

MCNZ General Secretary Rev Tara Tautari, opened the Thursday programme, delivering a powerful reflection on the theme of the assembly, 'Arise and Shine for the Glory of God Is Upon You'. Business then continued before the election of area presidents and the executive office of the world assembly. Newly elected President, Louise Wilson, Vice President Patricia Mapani and Treasurer Jeanette Bouknigh will carry on the mantle of the work of the Methodist and Uniting Church Women in their new roles. Of special mention is that our own, Simulata Pope Hiko was elected as the World Secretary and Tuituivao Salevao as Vice President of the South Pacific Area. They will both fill their respective roles with grace and love over the next five years.

Reports continued on Friday and the day concluded with a cultural dance performed by members of the South Pacific Area. It was a fitting farewell to outgoing area president Olive Tanielu and her committee, recognising their exemplary leadership and their dedication to maintaining the relationship between the seven units in the area.

The final day of the assembly began with the announcement of the Helen Kim Scholars. A moment of special pride for the South Pacific Area and the New Zealand Unit was the selection of Silika Isaia as one of the Helen Kim Scholars. We look forward to the continued development and work of the scholarship programme in continuing to develop the skills and talents of Silika as a leader.

In the afternoon more than 700 people gathered for the closing ceremony and service that included acknowledgement of the outgoing office of the world assembly and area presidents, the induction of the new office of the world assembly and area presidents and the sharing of communion.

Words from Bishop Pumla Nzimande were a fitting reminder to the assembly - the time to arise and shine is now; building God's kingdom begins now in the work that we do in our communities, parishes, areas and in the world assembly. Against our theme of being united in faith and called to serve, the assembly theme invites us as NZMWF members to unreservedly rise to the call of service for God's glory is upon us already, bringing with us our talents and gifts that make us shine.