



May 2026



Welcome to the monthly newsletter of the Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana Aotearoa

The Connexional Office

Message from the General Secretary – Rev Tara Tautari

At the end of a busy week, I jumped on an online meeting with Jill Hawkey, Executive Director of the Christchurch Methodist Mission. Our kaupapa was housing for our retired Presbyters, the practical, pastoral question of how we care for those who have spent their lives caring for our communities. As often happens when you spend time with Jill, the conversation soon widened. She mentioned, almost in passing, that she had been on the radio speaking to RNZ about the government's newly announced changes to social housing.

For those who may have missed it: the government has lifted the rent contribution for social housing tenants from 25 to 30 percent of their income, leaving an estimated 84,000 households around \$30 a week worse off, while increasing the accommodation supplement for some private renters. Jill, alongside other housing advocates, was asking the questions that matter most: who carries the cost of these reforms, and at what price to the whānau we walk with?

She pushed back, in particular, on the framing that people in social housing are somehow "stuck" and need to be moved on. She spoke of fifteen whānau, some of whom had previously experienced homelessness, who moved into the Mission's housing five years ago. "They're thriving," she said. "They've got housing stability, their kids are in school, they know the community ... do we really want to be saying to these families, well, actually, now you've got to be independent and you've got to leave this community? And sorry, kids, you've got to change schools and go somewhere else."

Jill also raised a concern familiar to anyone who has watched this crisis deepen, that any lift in the accommodation supplement risks being swallowed up by landlords raising rents, leaving tenants no better off than before.

Even through a screen, it struck me how seamlessly the threads of our work weave together. From housing our retired Presbyters in their later years, to housing whānau who have known the hard edges of homelessness, to speaking truth in the public square when policy threatens the most vulnerable -this is the ongoing mahi of the Church. From our Parishes and Rohe, Missions and community housing providers up and down the motu, our Connexion remains a living network of care, advocacy, and hope.

May we keep listening, keep showing up, and keep insisting, gently and firmly, that every person, at every stage of life, deserves a place to call home.

Ngā mihi nui, and happy reading.



Introduction from our ecumenical chaplain at the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT)

Keita Hotere

Kia ora koutou,

As the Methodist member on the Taranaki Tertiary Chaplaincy Board, I provide this introduction from Chris Lee, our ecumenical chaplain at the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT), based in New Plymouth. WITT is a provincial tertiary education provider, with students currently enrolled across mostly certificate and diploma-level courses. Chris is a retired pastor and was employed by the Taranaki Tertiary Chaplaincy Board in October 2023. He is part of Te Puna

Manaaki the Wellbeing Hub team at WITT, involved in all areas of campus life and working with students and staff. Our board is privileged with the wealth of experience Chris brings to the role. I thank the Lower North Island Synod for their continued financial support for the role.
Rev Keita Hotere

Kia ora koutou. My name is Chris Lee, and I am privileged to serve in my role as Chaplain at WITT (Western Institute of Technology Taranaki).

I have a long history with WITT. In 1977, I studied first-year NZCS (Science) at Taranaki Polytechnic and was elected Student Association President that year. I started work in Taranaki Base Hospital's medical laboratory, completing NZCS (Paramedical), as well as Certificate and Specialist qualifications. After 11 years, I returned to Taranaki Polytechnic from 1989-2000, teaching anatomy & physiology, science, sport injuries, first aid & computer papers and gained senior academic staff member status. I loved teaching and made lifelong friends with academic colleagues and students alike.

I entered full-time church work as pastor at CityLife Church, retiring mid-2022 after 22 years. I currently serve as chaplain with Police (13 years) and the Taranaki Airs (starting my 5th seasons). I completed Professional Supervision studies and ran for NP District Council in 2022. In early 2023 I spent 4 months working with NZ Census.

I started as WITT chaplain in October 2023. The role serves staff (kaimahi) and students (akonga) alike. Since becoming chaplain, there have been significant changes in the NZ tertiary education sector impacting WITT through course cuts and staff reduction. As a member of the Te Puna Manaaki (student success) team, my role overlaps with others in supporting the well-being of both students and staff. I am often involved in planning, promotion and delivery of events e.g. graduation, special services, mental health, wellness, etc. The scope of my work provides opportunity to bring encouragement, embody hope and provide care for both staff and students alike.

I am grateful for the support given by our WITT chaplaincy board's uniquely skilled and gifted members. This combined backing from our New Plymouth church community provides stability, credibility and joy. It speaks volumes of the unity we have in our city.

I appreciate the Methodist community for releasing Keita to support Chaplaincy at WITT. Your financial giving and practical support are a source of great joy and encouragement. Ngā manaakitanga





Toaf Rāu, Faith, and Fellowship During NZ Rotuman Language Week 2026

TeRito Peyroux-Semu

Alongside New Zealand Sign Language Week, communities and institutions across Aotearoa are also celebrating 'Os Gasav Ne Fäeag Rotuam Ta, NZ Rotuman Language Week 2026. Throughout the country, families and a wide range of community groups, schools, libraries, councils, organisations, faith communities, and public spaces have been preparing meaningful ways to celebrate and uplift Rotuman language, culture, identity, and heritage



within their local contexts.

Among them is Wesley College, where aspects of Rotuman language and history are being incorporated throughout the week into chapel services and school life, with staff and students embracing Rotuman words and phrases as part of the celebration.

Within Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, the Kingsland Rotuman Congregation of Auckland Central Parish continues to play a deeply significant role as the Church's only Rotuman congregation and one of the longest standing Rotuman institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand. For decades, the congregation has faithfully preserved and nurtured Rotuman language, culture, fellowship, and faith, while continuing to be shaped and transformed through the Gospel and the life of the Church.

As a Rotuman faith community living as Tangata Tiriti within Aotearoa New Zealand, the congregation has also increasingly sought to be mindful of the Church's bicultural journey, the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the importance of honouring and acknowledging Tangata Whenua within the life and practice of the community. For many within the congregation, this growing awareness and practice has been deeply shaped through their life within Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, and reflects a desire to celebrate and nurture Rotuman language and culture with humility, gratitude, and respect within the wider context of Aotearoa.

This year, the congregation has prepared a range of offerings for Rotuman Language Week, including the daily release of Rotuman hymns throughout the week, many drawn from treasured translations by respected Rotuman language and faith leaders. The congregation hosted a special combined Mother's Day and Rotuman Language Week Opening Service and community luncheon, which was warmly attended by members of the wider community, ecumenical friends and family, representatives from various organisations and ministries, and neighbouring faith communities. The congregation will conclude the week with their annual Fere Friday event, a fun opportunity for family and fellowship on Friday evening at Bounce Trampoline Park in Avondale. (Fere means "to fly" in Rotuman.)

The congregation was also given the privilege of leading this year's official NZ Rotuman Language Week poster and campaign imagery for the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, which they chose to centre around the traditional Rotuman practice of Toaf Rāu, the communal sharing of food around an ever extending table of hospitality and belonging. Through this imagery, the congregation sought to reflect not only Rotuman cultural values of service, reciprocity, inclusion, intergenerational connection, and care, but also the Gospel vision of a table where all are welcomed, nourished, and embraced in community together. In many ways, the concept of Toaf Rāu reflects the congregation's own aspirations as a faith community within Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, to continue creating spaces of welcome, relationship, hospitality, and shared belonging across generations, cultures, and communities.

The 2026 Rotuman Language Week theme, "Āf'āk, putua, a'pumuā'āk ma rak'āk 'os fäega ma 'os ag fak Rotuma, la se maoen 'e 'os tore", "Treasure, nurture and teach our Rotuman language and culture so it may live on through generations", continues to be reflected in the





faithful work of communities throughout Aotearoa who are ensuring that language, culture, memory, identity, and faith continue to live on through both fellowship and service.

For more information and updates:

The Kingsland congregation's Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/KingslandTrinity>

Ministry for Pacific Peoples: <https://www.mpp.govt.nz>



The Merry Widow returns to Christchurch!

Katherine Doig

Dress in your finest black-tie and waltz the night away at The Tannery Christchurch this July with Toi Toi Opera's opulent, sparkling new production of Lehár's timeless operetta, The Merry Widow.

It's the ultimate 'will-they, won't-they' romance, wrapped up in a glittering world of Parisian parties, jam-packed with giggles and all those irresistible melodies you know and love. Plus, if you fancy being whisked off your feet by a special someone, you'll even have a chance to join in the dancing.

Directed by Julian Anderson, with Musical Direction and Arrangement by Jeremy Woodside, and featuring an exquisite Aotearoa NZ cast, chorus, musical, & creative team. A fully-staged immersive production, with piano and string quartet accompaniment.

Bubbly, elegant, and just a little bit scandalous, this is a joyful and enchanting evening that's guaranteed to leave you humming!

When & Where: 24 & 25 July, 7.30-9.30pm at The Tannery, Christchurch

Duration/Language: 90 minutes (plus interval with the opportunity to dance), sung in English.

Ticketing: Your choice of general admission or premium table seating. Each premium cabaret table seats seven. Refreshments available. Book now via Humanitix [click here](#).



Annual "Polopolo" Gathering Celebrates First Fruits and Community Giving

Henry Høglund

On Saturday, 2 May 2026, our church community came together to celebrate our annual First Fruits Collection Day, known as the "Polopolo" Gathering. This special occasion reflects the biblical principle found in Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing."

Now in its sixth year, the Polopolo Gathering continues a cherished legacy of faith, gratitude, and generosity. The event provides an opportunity for our growers to bring forward their first and best produce, offering thanks to God for His guidance and provision throughout the growing journey.





The collected first fruits are then shared among key members of the church, including the Minister, Stewards, elderly members, widows, and those living with long-term medical conditions. This act of sharing is a practical expression of honouring God while caring for one another within the church family.

This year's gathering saw 22 growers take part, made up of long-standing elderly members alongside an encouraging number of young families and youth who were eager to be involved. Together, the group successfully distributed 19 boxes of kumara to church members and is currently organising further contributions to support the wider Maungakiekie community and our Mt Wellington neighbours.

We extend our sincere thanks to Hainoame Fulivai, our funding consultant, for her assistance in securing financial support from the Mt Wellington Community Trust. We gratefully acknowledge the Trust's support, which has played an important role in sustaining and growing this meaningful community initiative.



Worship at Hand content expanded

Philip Garside Publishing Ltd

Each week your zipped package includes a colour .jpg image to use on the cover of your order of service and your PowerPoint slides. We have now added to your package a large A4 PDF black and white line art version of the weekly image for children to colour in. Philip has also started recording Sermon Seeds for Sunday, a free 6-minute audio summary of the ideas behind the *Worship at Hand* sermon for the week. Check out a sample of both for Trinity Sunday 31 May 2026 here:

<https://philipgarsidebooks.com/products/worship-at-hand-trinity-31-may-2026>



A Cup of Care, A Community of Hope

Karen Coleman Lifewise

Lifewise is calling on the Methodist community to get in behind **Merge Café**—a place of warmth, dignity and belonging for people experiencing homelessness in Tāmaki Makaurau. One simple way to help right now is to donate to the [Lifewise Big Sleepout](#), with funds raised supporting the day-to-day mahi and wrap-around support that happens through Merge.

If you haven't seen it yet, the [Seven Sharp](#) story featuring Merge Café—aired 30 April 2026—captured what our community sees every day: a café that is far more than a meal. It's a safe and welcoming space where street whānau can catch their breath, be treated with respect, and connect with practical support that helps people take the next step forward. The Lifewise Big Sleepout is a chance to stand in solidarity, raise awareness, and fund real, practical support. Every donation helps keep the doors open at Merge Café—helping provide nourishing kai, a welcoming space, and a team that can walk alongside people facing tough circumstances, including loss of housing, job loss, family breakdown, health challenges, and addiction.





We've also been uplifted by the incredible support of [David Letele](#)—a powerful example of someone using his profile and platform to back people doing it tough, and to champion the value of second chances and community. In a recent visit to Merge Café David purchased 150 meals for our homeless whānau. His generosity is a reminder that when we come together, we can create real change for individuals and whānau who have been pushed to the margins.

How you can help

- Make a donation to the Lifewise Big Sleepout fundraising page go to the <https://bigsleepout.org.nz/> or scan this QR code.
- Watch and share the [Seven Sharp](#) story about Merge Café with your whānau, parish and networks.
- Invite your congregation or small group to sponsor a participant, or to fundraise collectively to support Merge Café.
- Hold Merge Café and all whānau experiencing homelessness in your prayers—and keep the conversation going about compassionate, practical solutions.
- For more information about Lifewise and the work we do check out our [latest newsletter](#)

Thank you for standing with our neighbours who are experiencing homelessness. With your support, Merge Café can continue to be a place where people are welcomed with manaakitanga, offered practical help, and reminded that hope and belonging are possible.



Transition Services and House

Julie Roberts

Please take a moment to watch the video below featuring feedback from residents sharing their experiences with Young Transition Services and the Young Moms Transition House.

Every young person deserves safety, belonging, and hope.

Your support can make a real difference — providing a warm bedroom instead of a car to sleep in.

- [Click here](#) to make a donation
- [Click here](#) to watch the video





Faith in Action: How Kaurihohore Church is working with its community

Mike Nielsen

Over the last few months, Kaurihohore Church is proving that a mission statement is more than just words on a page. By "Sharing God's love, creating hope, and working for justice," the congregation is actively weaving itself into the fabric of the Kaurihohore and Te Kamo communities through tangible acts of service and advocacy.

Creating hope at Kaurihohore School

During Holy Week the Church continued its tradition of neighbourly kindness at Kaurihohore School. Following the end-of-term assembly, the church team distributed hot cross buns to 133 families waiting to pick up their children after school, as well as providing buns to the school staff for morning tea. Each package included a label with the poignant reminder from Basil C. Hume: "The great gift of Easter is hope."

This simple gesture continues to be well received and serves as a bridge to the school whānau, embodying the church's commitment to sharing love and creating hope through presence and generosity.

Partnering with the Te Kamo community to commemorate ANZAC Day

On April 25, the community's spirit was on full display at the 2026 ANZAC Day service in Te Kamo. Organised by the Church, attendance surged this year, with approximately 600 people filling the War Memorial Hall and participating outside via a TV screen and speakers.

This year's service focused on the Confrontation with Indonesia during the mid-1960s. The reality of this "undeclared war" was brought to life through a keynote address by Major Peter Sullivan (ret'd) shared sobering accounts of swamp warfare. Ongoing involvement of the youth in from our community was a highlight, with a Cadet and students from Te Kamo Intermediate reciting poetry, students from Te Kamo High School actively involved in set up, and the likes of the local Scouts and Guides coming forward to lay wreaths and poppies.

Organising the ANZAC Day service is an ongoing tangible way the Church can partner with our local community groups and schools to provide a focal point for the entire community to stand as one.

Working for justice through Building Better Communities

The church is also tackling systemic issues through the Building Better Communities series. Held throughout February and March, this initiative – led the Church with support from St John's Golden Church and The Salvation Army – enabled community conversations focused on six critical topics identified in The Salvation Army's State of the Nation reports: Children and Youth, Crime and Punishment, Work and Incomes, Housing, Social Hazards, and Māori Wellbeing.

The format of each evening featured a local guest expert followed by small-group discussions where the community's own perspectives were the priority. These conversations led to the identification of actionable steps, such as establishing schools as support hubs to provide whānau care, supporting literacy through local organisations, and developing community gardens to foster connection and resource security. The series was well received and underscored that genuine connection, and collective caring is the most effective response to the isolation, poverty, and unemployment facing the region. A summary report of the Building Better Communities series has been shared with local leaders and is available for download at kaurichurch.org.nz.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Northern Presbytery Mission Fund for their vital funding, which has empowered us to deliver these initiatives and serve our community effectively.





Professional Development Grants

Sonia Faulkner

Due dates for 2026 Applications 15th May, 15th August, 15th November

Professional Development grants are funded by Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The fund is administered by the Professional Development Grants Committee (PDG), which has membership from both Te Taha

Māori and Taiwi. Funds are allocated equally to Te Taha Māori and to Taiwi applicants in any one year.

Professional development is the acquisition of skills and experience that will enhance ministry. It encompasses academic learning, the development of tikanga/mātauranga Māori, spiritual formation, and the development of practical ministry skills.

Priority in 2025-2026 will be given to training opportunities which will:

- enhance theological development aligned with our Methodist ethos and bicultural journey
- reflect our diverse church/community context of Aotearoa
- offer opportunities to first-time applicants and young people
- resource as many people as possible from a limited pool of funding

Find application forms, eligibility criteria and guidelines on the MCNZ website under Mahi (Grants and Funding) or contact the PDG Secretary [Sonia Faulkner](#).

CAMPUS AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Theology@Otago papers 2026
On campus and via distance learning

Enrol for semester 2

Semester 2 papers with an intensive

CHTH 230/336** Māori Theology and Religion (Intensive in Ōhope, 29 June–3 July)
PAST 322/MINS 414** Christian Theology and the Arts (Intensive in Dunedin, 6–10 July)

Semester 2 papers

BIBS 112	Interpreting the Old Testament
BIBS 132	Introductory New Testament Greek II
BIBS 211/311	God, Land and Exile in the Hebrew Prophets
CHTH 111	Dang, Theology
CHTH 131	God and Ethics in the Modern World
CHTH 207/307	History of Christianity in the Pacific
CHTH 224/324	Theology and the Environment
CHTH 235/335	Special Topic: Tikanga Māori, Spiritual Regulation and the New Zealand State
CHTH 318/418	Reconciliation, Christian Ethics and Public Theology
HEBR 132	Introductory Biblical Hebrew II
PAST 318/MINS 410*	Pastoral Care in Dying, Grief and Loss
PAST 321/MINS 413*	Missional God, Missional People

Pre-Christmas Summer School (9 November – 12 December 2026)
CHTH 217/317* Special Topic: Theology and Science

All papers are taught on-campus and by distance learning, except where indicated (*distance only, **face-to-face intensive)

Theology Programme
03 479 8639
theology@otago.ac.nz
otago.ac.nz/theology
AskOtago 0800 80 80 98
ask.otago.ac.nz

Study Theology at the University of Otago

Professor Paul Trebilco

The Theology Programme at the University of Otago offers many opportunities for the study of Theology, Biblical Studies, Church History, Ministry, Pastoral Theology (including Chaplaincy) and Māori and Pacific Theology. You can study either on-campus or across Aotearoa New Zealand through our distance study programme. We are committed to serving Christian communities throughout the country. Semester 2 starts on July 13th.

For details of papers: [Click Here](#)

To enrol: [Click Here](#)

To keep up to date, like us on Facebook: [Click Here](#)





Bradley Trust Research Grant

Sonia Faulkner

Due date for Applications 23 October 2026

The Bradley Trust was set up with funds left to Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, the Methodist Church of New Zealand by the estate of Wesley Bradley in 1974.

The fund is administered by the Professional Development Grants Committee (PDG). PDG is a Connexional committee with membership from both Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi.

A total of up to \$10,000 can be allocated annually to support one or more major research projects in the church and community.

Priority will be given to projects which:

- are aligned with the Methodist ethos and bicultural journey
- reflect the diverse church/community context of Aotearoa

Who may apply:

- individuals or groups undertaking major research projects

Find current application forms, eligibility criteria and guidelines on the MCNZ website under Mahi (Grants and Funding) or contact the PDG Secretary [Sonia Faulkner](#)

Applications will include a one-page outline of the research project indicating the nature of the project and its benefits to church and/or community in Aotearoa.

Applications must be accompanied by two supporting letters from:

- Someone representing the Methodist Church of New Zealand (Synod Superintendent, Parish Steward, Methodist Alliance, Mission and Ecumenical, Tumuaki)
- Someone who can indicate relevance of the research or activity to the applicant, the Methodist Church and/or the community (research supervisor, representative of relevant community group).

Applications and supporting material are to be sent to the PDG Secretary [Sonia Faulkner](#) by 23 October.





Worship Leaders Wanted for Rakiura / Stewart Island

Beverley Osborn
Oban Presbyterian Church
Serve. Rest. Create. Worship.

Oban Presbyterian Church warmly invites lay or ordained worship leaders from any Christian tradition to help lead worship in the island community

of Rakiura / Stewart Island. This is an opportunity to share in worship within a small, welcoming congregation in one of the most beautiful places in Aotearoa.

Sundays Needed

Help is needed for worship leadership on:
2nd and 4th Sundays
May – October

A Chance to Be Creative

Because visiting leaders come from many traditions, we warmly encourage creative and thematic approaches to the Church year.

You might shape worship around:

The Christian Calendar

- Easter season reflections
- Pentecost and the movement of the Spirit
- Creation themes drawn from the island environment

Special Sundays

- Grandparents Sunday – celebrating intergenerational faith
- First Responders Sunday – honouring those who serve and protect the community
- Sea Sunday / Creation Sunday – reflecting on stewardship of the ocean and land
- Community Thanksgiving Sundays

Rakiura's natural setting invites worship that connects faith, community, and creation.

What the Church Can Offer

While travel costs cannot be covered, the church can offer:

- Two nights free accommodation for two people
- Options for longer stays

Many leaders enjoy combining the visit with a retreat, holiday, or creative ministry weekend.

Who Can Help

- Lay worship leaders
- Ordained ministers
- Leaders from any Christian denomination

Interested?

For more information please contact:

Rev Nyalie Paris

rev.paris.nz@gmail.com





Meditation

The Connexional Office

There is a thread running through this month's stories, a quiet, persistent question about who has a place at the table, and who has a place to call home.

Jill Hawkey speaks of whānau "thriving" in their housing, their children rooted in school and community. The Kingsland Rotuman congregation gathers around the image of Toaf Rāu, the table that keeps extending to

welcome one more.

At Merge Café, a cup of tea becomes a place to catch one's breath. At Kaurihohore School, a hot cross bun carries the words, "The great gift of Easter is hope." In Maungakiekie, twenty-two growers bring forward their first fruits so that the elder, the widow, the unwell are remembered first.

These are not unrelated gestures. They are the same gesture, made in different places, by different hands. They are the Church practising what it believes: that no one is meant to eat alone, sleep cold, or carry their hardest days unaccompanied.

Jesus knew this. He kept finding tables, borrowed ones, hillside ones, upper rooms, and he kept widening the circle around them until there was room for tax collectors and fishermen, mourners and children, the woman at the well and the thief on the cross. The Kingdom, it turns out, looks rather a lot like a meal that doesn't end.

So perhaps the meditation this month is simply this: look around the table you are part of. Who is missing? Who has been told, gently or otherwise, that they should move on, make room, be independent now? And what would it cost, what would it give, to pull up one more chair?



Prayer Focus

The Connexional Office

God of the open table,

We give thanks for every place in our Connexion where welcome is being practised, in cafés and chapels, on marae and in classrooms, in transition houses and tertiary campuses, on Rakiura and in Maungakiekie, in Taranaki and Te Kamo.

We pray for those who have no place to call home tonight, and for the families bracing against the rising cost of keeping one. Hold them, and stir us to advocacy that is gentle and firm.

We pray for our retired Presbyters, that they may be cared for as faithfully as they have cared for others.

We pray for our chaplains, for those serving in hospitals, prisons, schools, and sports clubs, who carry presence into places where words sometimes fail.

We pray for our young people: the rangatahi in transition houses, the students of Wesley College learning the language of their tūpuna, the children whose schooling depends on a stable address.





We pray for those who lead worship in small congregations and large, in Rotuman and English and te reo Māori, that their offering may be received as gift.

And we pray for ourselves, that we would keep listening, keep showing up, and keep insisting that every person, at every stage of life, has a seat at the table You have set.

Ko koe tō mātou piringa, tō mātou orange. You are our refuge and our life.

Āmine.

