



December 2025



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

Advent Reflections: Legacy, Renewal, and Hope

Advent is a season of watching and waiting, a time when we pause to remember where we have come from, even as we lean forward in hope toward what God is bringing into being among us. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us, "See, I am doing a new thing; now it springs up, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19). Advent calls us to notice those new things, often emerging from the faithfulness of what has gone before.

I write this after having the privilege of attending the reopening of the Te Atawhai Centre in Kawakawa, Northland, a moment rich with gratitude, memory, and vision. Kawakawa is a small but significant town in Te Tai Tokerau, long shaped by movement, gathering, and faith. It has served as a hub for surrounding rural communities, and within the Weteriana tradition, it has been a place where the Gospel has been lived out through hospitality, service, and deep relational commitment. The reopening service, led by Rev Hoana Flay and Kuina Scrivener, was grounded in karakia, praise, and waiata, and surrounded by the warmth of whanaungatanga. People travelled from Whangārei, Waikare, Matawaia, Kaikohe, Waiomio, and Dargaville, gathering to celebrate a newly renovated space that continues to serve as a place of faith, care, and community. The day was completed in the best of Methodist ways, around a shared hāngī, stories, laughter, and connection.

For me, this moment was deeply personal. I grew up in Waiomio, a quiet valley community where faith, whānau, and whenua are tightly interwoven, and where Weteriana life was shaped through small congregations, faithful leaders, and a strong sense of collective responsibility. Te Atawhai was a place I visited often, and it holds many memories of the people who offered spiritual leadership in that space, people who prayed faithfully, taught generously, challenged lovingly, and carried the Church through times of change. Their faith shaped not only that place, but generations of lives, including my own.

The reopening of Te Atawhai is more than the refurbishment of a building. It is a sign of continuity, of Weteriana legacy honoured and renewed. It reminds us that our faith is carried in places and people, in stories and relationships, and that what we inherit is never meant to be held tightly, but tended, renewed, and handed on.

Advent invites us into that same posture. We honour the past not by preserving it unchanged, but by allowing it to give us courage to imagine the future. The renovated walls of Te Atawhai speak of vision, of communities choosing once again to invest in spaces of hospitality, healing, and worship; of a Church that remembers who it is while discerning who it is becoming. As Mary proclaims in her song, "He has lifted up the lowly and filled the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:52–53). This is the hope we wait for, a hope grounded in God's justice, mercy, and promise.



As we journey through Advent, may we hold together memory and hope, legacy and imagination. May we give thanks for those who have gone before us, and may we be faithful kaitiaki for those yet to come. And may we, like the people gathered in Kawakawa, continue to show up, to pray, to sing, to serve, and to trust that God is still at work among us.



Congregation at St Paul's Methodist church, Remuera

Trevor Hoggard

On Sunday 16 November, the congregation at St Paul's Methodist church, Remuera, was hit by a couple of surprises. The first surprise was that this Sunday was the last Sunday of 2025 when all our young people would be in Auckland and able to attend church, but they so wanted to present their usual nativity, we took a leap of faith and celebrated the Christmas nativity service even before Advent had begun.

As if this wasn't enough of a shock to the system, one couple from the parish had asked to be married on that day in front of all their church friends, but without prior warning. The surprise was complete. Suspensions were first raised when about 40 strangers turned up for the service - equally sworn to secrecy. Local church members assumed it was to see their young relative in the nativity presentation, but were taken aback by the sheer number of visitors.

Even as the marriage ceremony began, many initially thought it was a typically inventive way for our young folk to present the nativity story, with several members thinking it might be the marriage of Mary and Joseph. Once the penny dropped, all were enchanted by the lovely service and enjoyed a generous buffet which had been prepared in the church lounge to follow.

It was surprising also how many couples came forward after the service to say it had been the best wedding they had ever attended - including their own in some cases! People warmed to the simplicity of the event and the genuine warmth and friendship in which it had been shared. The photo shows Jiri Basik and Simone Gall as they leave the church at the close of the service.



UCANZ Update Week Beginning 24 November 2025

Andrew Doubleday

I'm writing from a motel in Whangārei. What a beautiful party of the motu, with warm and generous people! I've been re-discovering the richness and diversity of CVs. Saturday, sitting with a small yet highly engaged group at Maungaturoto.

On Sunday, I had the joy of sharing worship with the people of Kaurihohore, followed by their Christmas dinner (they start early!). This is a most unusual expression of a 'gathered community'. Their church buildings (lovingly cared for) are an expression of what I would describe as '19th century Presbyterian austere', yet accommodated to the comforts of the 21st century, and surrounded with a huge cemetery - the whole site is proudly listed as 'historic'. There is a primary School next door, and that's it. Nothing else. It sits almost alone in a beautiful part of the country, and its congregation (most from Whangārei) travel to be together. Their being together is of greater priority than where they do it. At the same time, they have a strong sense of mission, and of making a difference.





Yesterday saw me meeting with a small group of leaders from Whangarei and Hikurangi, and in the early evening a joyous and heartwarming time with the delightful people of Tutukaka Coast at Ngunguru, over conversation and pizza.

Leadership & Personal Development Resources

Want More Influence? Science Says You Need To Speak First In Meetings

One of the more useful exercises we, as a leadership, engaged with in my last Parish was to take the Belbins Team Roles inventory. This not only helped us to see who was best suited to contribute what, it also helped us to recognise that we each had a unique place that we needed to fill for the healthy functioning of the team. In this Forbes article, Mark Murphy not only lays out evidence for the veracity of the proposition that those who speak first tend to exercise the most influence, he also suggests a process to determine who is most appropriate person to speak first given the role that they will play in any anticipated scenario. Rather than seeing the phenomenon as a problem, recognise its reality and make it work for you. This includes recognising the importance of those we might consider a pain in the posterior. The article can be accessed [here](#).

Keep forgetting things? 4 simple ways — in 2 minutes or less — to remember more

Frank Haden offers some simple, tried and tested strategies for helping us to remember. The first one is 'Say it out Loud'. I do this all the time when I'm wanting to transcribe a line of numbers – works a treat. The article can be accessed [here](#).

Always Reading, Never Learning – Why you Forget Everything You Read and How to Fix it

So, following on from forgetting, here's another offering on holding on to our learnings.

Mai Chen KC used to be a regular commentator on RNZ afternoons. One thing about her that impressed me is that she seems NOT to hold onto books she has read – she passes them on, and seems able to recall very well what she has read, even years later. I suspect she has a photographic memory. My memory on the other hand leaks like a sieve. I have a reasonably sized library. Until I got distracted by acquiring a smart phone, I read a lot. Now, not so much. While I haven't read every book on my shelves, I've at least dipped into nearly all of them. Here's the thing. From time to time, I'll order a book on-line, and when it arrives I'd discover that I already have a copy. As I start into it, I'd have a dawning awareness that I've already read it – though forgotten most of what I'd read. My suspicion is that this is not uncommon. So, I was gratified to come across this very helpful YouTube posting offering some strategies to make our reading more memorable. It can be accessed [here](#).

Homilies and Preaching Resources

My response to the lectionary for the 30th of November is titled 'An Unexpected Visitor' and focusses on the Gospel reading of Matthew 24 vs 36-44'. This marks the beginning of a new Lectionary cycle - Year A, Matthew. It also marks the beginning of Advent, and, as is usually the case, we start looking at the coming of Jesus through jumping forward to anticipate his return. The homily can be engaged with [here](#).

Trevor Hoggard continues with the 2nd set of Lectionary readings. His texts for Sunday the 30th of November are Isaiah 52 vs 1-12, Psalm 9 vs 1-8, and Matthew 24 vs 15-28. Trevor's sermon can be accessed [here](#).

Gospel Conversations - out of the Dunedin Anglican Diocese. They host a conversation of 4 Theologians / Practitioners around the Gospel lectionary text for the coming Sunday. The site with all its options can be accessed [here](#). The latest 'Conversation' is for the coming Sunday based on the lectionary Gospel of Matthew 24 vs 36-44. It can be accessed [here](#).





Again, it will help broaden all our reach if you 'subscribe' and 'like'.

Once again, use the videos as you will.

Finally.

As always, if you find you'd prefer not to receive this weekly newsletter, please let me know and your address will be removed.



Baring Square Methodist Church Ashburton Centennial Celebration

Was officially opened on March 13th 1926 and the Parish will celebrate the Centennial on Sunday March 8th 2026 with a special Church Service at 10am followed by a light meal.

Please contact the Baring Square Methodist Church office [Email](mailto:office@ashburtonmethodist.church) with any memorabilia/stories to share from the 100 years that the building has been in existence.

Services are still being held in the Church 10am each Sunday.

Join us as we celebrate **100 years**

Date: Sunday, 8th March 2026

Celebration Service: 10:00 AM

Location: Baring Square East Ashburton.

We look forward to celebrating with you on the above date.

Numbers required for catering purposes.

Please RSVP by 19th Dec 2025

Email: office@ashburtonmethodist.church

Postal Address: Ashburton Methodist Parish
C/O 109 Chalmers Avenue, Hampstead
ASHBURTON

Parish Stewards: Judith Crozier; 0272443075; Alister Smyth 03 3086025



FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT CHRISTCHURCH AREA December newsletter 2025

Trudy Downes

New Zealand Natural Disasters Quiz

- 1) What were the 5 top infrastructure breakdowns in the Christchurch Earthquake series?
- 2) What is the percentage chance of a volcanic eruption in Auckland?
- 3) What years were the following earthquakes: Murchison, Hawkes Bay, Canterbury (Darfield), Christchurch?
- 4) What should you do in an earthquake?

Answers at bottom of page

Organise a simple Summer event with your Neighbours

- An afternoon tea at a certain time,
- everyone brings their own drink to a location on the berm
- A gutter clean-up day
- A sit and watch the sunset, bring your own deck chair and drink





- A chalk drawing gallery, a picture on each driveway
- A mailbox dress up day

Empty it
Take all valuables with you
Remove valuables, or hide them out of sight

Secure it
Lock all doors, with windows up
Use a steering lock if possible

Light it
If possible, park in well lit areas with good visibility

Park it
Park in a secure location, such as a garage or out of sight from others

Extra security options:
Consider an alarm and record all your serial numbers

Join Neighbourhood Support and create a Neighbourhood Group

Vehicle Theft or Theft from a Vehicle

Theft involving vehicles are common crimes in New Zealand, with thieves often targeting valuables like cash, tools and devices. By taking simple precautions, you can minimise the risk of theft and protect your property.

Climate Change/Food Resilience

There is a bit of discussion in regards to planning for the effects of climate change on communities under the Civil Defence banner. We have heard of some great ideas amongst Neighbours to start some preparation.

- Seed swaps to ensure that neighbours have veges in their backyards,
- Mapping what fruit and nut trees are in the neighbourhood,
- Running water into tanks from sheds and garages,
- Planting trees that share fruit over fences and increase shade cover
- Keeping chickens

If this is an interest for you, you may wish to strengthen your Neighbourhood Group by 'mapping'

your food resources by the seasons as part of your emergency plans.

Check out the [Prepare for Wildfire tool](#).

More information on being prepared for summer

- [Own your zone](#)
- [Work out what supplies you need at home](#)
- [Your summer checklist](#)
- [Prepare for any weather](#)
- [Get ready for extreme heat](#)
- [Know how you'll stay informed](#)
- [Protect your property from wildfire](#)
- [Check it's alright before you light](#)



Mt Eden Light of Life Homework Club (Poako)

Lute Ata

The Light of Life homework program was established in August 2024 with the purpose of assisting and supporting the learning of students and youth of the Auckland Central Parish and local community.

Every Monday evening during the school term, we hold our program at the Mt Eden Methodist Church. Students work with volunteer mentors in small groups to help with homework and learning activities, particularly in Maths and Literacy. There is also a focus on NCEA students, assisting

with assessments and preparation for external examinations.

We also run activities throughout the year that help our students with team building and other areas. These include Tongan Language Week evening, a session with Tongan Mental health specialist on importance of well-being and team building/games evenings at the end of each term.



Key to the program is the involvement of families which has been influential in its growth. This year, we have had over 50 students come through the program, working with over 20 families. The commitment of our families has contributed greatly to the success of the program, with older siblings currently studying at University level, volunteering as mentors and parents generously preparing meals each evening for our students.

At Light of Life, we wish to foster an environment where young people enjoy learning and feel comfortable asking questions and seeking help with their studies. Apart from academic success, a positive observation is the growth of students in their engagement and confidence throughout the year.

One challenge we face is recruiting qualified mentors such as teachers, especially for our NCEA students. We hope to build relationships with schools and investigate other avenues where we can get specialized assistance for NCEA students. If you are keen to help the program next year, we are always looking for qualified teachers to assist.

We finished a very busy year with a wonderful evening with our families and community, celebrating our Year 13 school leavers and acknowledging the volunteers who have supported the program. We were blessed to have the Ex-Vice President of the church, TeRito Peyroux-Semu as Guest Speaker providing inspirational words for our young learners.

We truly appreciate the support of the Auckland Central Parish, the Auckland Synod and the Methodist Church of NZ through the Dream Fund and PAC Distribution fund, that has assisted us in running this program.

As indicated by the growing numbers of families wishing to attend, the need is great and we hope to continue providing this service for our community, and the future generation of our Methodist Church of NZ.



Fostering Ministerial Resilience: A First-of-Its-Kind Workshop

Sonia Pope

On Saturday 6th of December, we were proud to host our first-ever workshop dedicated to pastoral wellbeing, bringing ministers together for an open and much-needed conversation about the pressures of ministry life. Although titled *Fostering Ministerial Resilience*, the heart of the workshop centred on recognising burnout, dealing with stress, and understanding compassion fatigue issues many

leaders silently carry.

This was the first workshop of its kind, designed specifically to give ministers a safe space to pause, reflect, and reconnect with their own wellbeing.

For many participants, it was the first time they had been able to speak openly about the emotional, spiritual, and physical toll of ministry.

Recognising the signs, we explored how burnout often appears gradually through exhaustion, irritability, withdrawal, loss of joy, or feeling overwhelmed.

Ministers reflected on how easily these signs become "normal" in ministry life, and how important it is to notice them early rather than push through.

We also unpacked the impact of chronic stress and how it affects the body, mind, and spirit. Participants discussed what stress feels like for them personally and how often they place congregational needs above their own.

The session normalised the reality that self-care is not optional it is essential for long-term, sustainable ministry.

Compassion Fatigue & Moral Injury. Another key focus was compassion fatigue the emotional weariness that develops from carrying others' pain.





Many ministers recognised themselves in these discussions, acknowledging how difficult it can be to continue offering empathy when one's own reserves are low.

We also touched on moral injury, which occurs when leaders feel stretched between difficult decisions, pastoral expectations, and their own values.

These conversations helped participants understand that these challenges are not personal shortcomings, but common experiences within caring professions.

Space for Honest Conversation. One of the most significant outcomes of the day was the atmosphere of safety and solidarity. Ministers shared freely, supported one another, and discovered that their experiences are widely shared.

Many commented that simply hearing others describe similar struggles was healing in itself.

Tools for Building Resilience

The workshop also introduced practical strategies for supporting resilience, including:

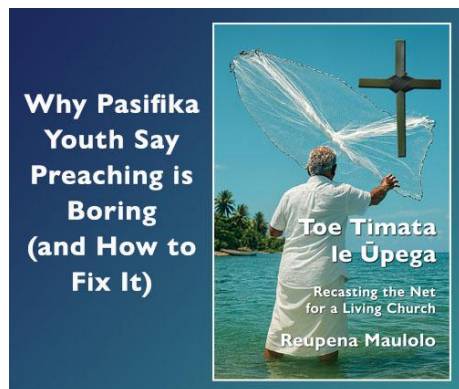
- Setting time and emotional boundaries
- Building rhythms of rest and recovery
- Engaging in regular supervision or spiritual direction
- Creating peer support groups
- Recognising early warning signs
- Treating self-care as a ministry responsibility

Participants left with personal commitments small, achievable steps they can implement immediately to safeguard their wellbeing.

Looking Ahead

This workshop marks an important beginning. It opened up space for truth-telling, connection, and proactive support for those who tirelessly support others. We hope this will be the first of many initiatives focused on strengthening ministerial wellbeing and fostering healthier, more sustainable ministry practices.

Our ministers give so much. Investing in their resilience is essential not only for them, but for the communities they serve.



Preachers and Worship leaders

Philip Gardise Publishing Ltd

This new book – **Toe Timata le Ūpega: Recasting the Net for a Living Church** – explores why Pasifika Youth say preaching is boring, and why that's a problem for the church.

CCCS minister and academic Rev Dr Reupena Maulolo has spent years researching this challenge and shows leaders how to preach meaningfully to the next generation, so the church remains alive, relevant, and relational.

Print and eBook editions are available [here](#).

The December, January and February issues of the popular RCL-based, weekly worship resource *Worship at Hand* are also now available on the website.





WORLD DAY OF PRAYER – FRIDAY 6 MARCH 2026

“I Will Give You Rest: Come”

Lynne Scott

Programme written by the World Day of Prayer Committee of Nigeria for 2026 Matthew 11:28-30

“Rest for the Weary” By Gift Amarachi Ottah

Resource packs containing the 2026 World Day of Prayer materials, including the Service booklet, have

been posted out to groups throughout New Zealand. These bring us a powerful invitation drawn from Matthew 11:28-30. At a time when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, our Nigerian sisters offer profound insights into finding rest in God.

Through their exploration of different kinds of burdens – shame, systemic oppression, religious persecution, poverty and despair – the writers help us understand both the weight of human suffering and the depths of divine rest. Their work shows us that true rest isn't just about physical relief, but about transformation through God's grace and community support.

You will find this theme beautifully expressed across all programme components. The Worship Service features a playlet about a young girl named Chioma and stories of three Nigerian women: Beatrice, Jato, and Blessing. Their experiences reveal how God provides rest through community support, faith, and hope.

The Bible Study explores divine rest from creation to Jesus' time, examining wisdom traditions and Jesus' transformation of rest from rigid rules to liberating mercy. The Children's Programme includes prayers, storytelling, and other activities that help children understand how they can both receive and extend God's rest to others. Through interactive elements, children learn about Nigeria's rich culture while exploring what it means to bring their burdens to God and help others who are weary.

The Country Background provides comprehensive information about Nigeria's history, culture, and contemporary challenges, with special attention to the achievements and struggles of Nigerian women. Original music composed for the programme includes a moving theme song by Chisom R. Chukwumerije, written especially for this World Day of Prayer service. The song invites those who are weary and oppressed to find comfort and rest in God. The artistic work of Gift Amarachi Ottah beautifully captures the theme through her depiction of burdens carried by women from diverse backgrounds.

The WDP Nigerian Committee has woven together their cultural wisdom with the universal need for rest. Through symbols like the calabash bowl, which represents both daily sustenance and divine provision, they remind us how God meets us in our weariness. As we prepare for WDP 2026, may we learn to embody Jesus' invitation: 'Come to me, all you who are weary.' Together, let us become channels of God's rest in our troubled world. All resources can be downloaded from the [World Day of Prayer Aotearoa New Zealand website](#). The National Committee is holding a livestream workshop in Christchurch on Saturday 24 January 2026 commencing at 10 am. The link will be available on our website – or [email](#).



Save the date!!

Dale Peach South Island Methodist Synod - Te Hinota Weteriana o te Waipounamu

2026 Kete Aroha o Waipounamu School of Theology

9am Friday 8 to 4.30pm Saturday 9 May 2026 in the Aldersgate Centre, Central Christchurch

Theme: Being the Beloved Community

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters, beloved by God, that he has chosen you. NRSVUE

Programme:

Session 1 - Friday morning - Being the Beloved Community

Session 2 - Friday afternoon - Growing the Beloved Community - we are pleased to announce that **Dr Lynne Taylor**, Jack Somerville Senior Lecturer in Pastoral Theology, **University of Otago**, will be leading this session, sharing her recent research on how to connect with people outside the church.

Session 3 - a light evening programme to finish day 1

Session 4 - Saturday morning - Strengthening the Beloved Community

Session 5 - Saturday afternoon - Celebrating the Beloved Community - finishing with a Communion Service All are invited to visit a local restaurant for this evening's meal.

We have pencil booked 12 reasonably priced units/ensuite rooms at The Grange Boutique B&B and Motel, that is a 270m walk to Aldersgate. These are available on a first-come basis. If interested please email Dale.

Further programme details and registration forms, including cost, will be available March 2026.



Prayer Focus

The Connexional Office

Advent Blessing

May the light of Christ grow in you as you wait.
May hope find you in the quiet moments.
And may God's peace hold you, now and always.
Āmine.



Meditation

The Connexional Office

An Advent-Christmas Meditation: God With Us

Advent teaches us how to wait.

Not the hurried waiting of queues and deadlines, but the deep waiting of the heart the kind that listens, remembers, and hopes.

In this season, we stand between promise and fulfilment. The world is loud with urgency, yet

the Gospel speaks quietly: A child will be born. A light will dawn. God will come near.

We are reminded that God does not arrive through force or spectacle, but through vulnerability. Not in palaces or centres of power, but in borrowed space, among the ordinary, in a world still aching for healing.

Advent invites us to slow our steps and open our hands. To notice where God is already at work in the courage of communities, in the faithfulness of those who have gone before, in the quiet resilience of those who keep showing up.

At Christmas, we proclaim Emmanuel-God with us. Not God above us. Not God distant from us. But God choosing to dwell among us, to take flesh in our histories, our cultures, our whenua, our stories.

This is good news for a weary world. It tells us that nothing is too ordinary, too broken, or too forgotten to be touched by divine love.

So as we light the candles of Advent and gather again around the story of Christ's birth, may we make room room in our hearts, room in our communities, room in our Church.

May we wait with hope, welcome with courage, and live with love.

For the child who comes comes not only to be admired, but to transform us calling us into lives of justice, mercy, and peace.

Amen.

