



## February 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**

**Kia ora e te whānau o Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa,**

Welcome to our first *Connexions* of 2026.

As you read this, we are moving through Lent. I want to invite you to let this season slow your pace and steady your heart. This will be a full connexional year. You will feel that in your parish, in your rohe, in your Synod, in your committees, in your leadership. Important decisions are coming. Strategic work continues. Safeguarding, redress, leadership development, theological education, property stewardship, financial oversight, and our bicultural commitments will all ask something of you — care, courage, patience.

Lent does not ask you to do less. It asks you to go deeper. Before you decide, listen. Before you act, pray. Before you build, discern. The posture you carry into these months will matter as much as the outcomes you achieve.

This year will stretch you. It will stretch us. But it can also form us. If you see 2026 not simply as a year of projects to complete, but as a year of discipleship, a year where Christ shapes you more deeply, then your work becomes more than delivery. It becomes growth.

Remember: you are not doing this alone. We are Connexional for a reason. Your parish does not stand alone. Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi walk together in covenant partnership. Lay and ordained ministry belong together. Small and large congregations are one Hāhi. When you lean into that connection, the load is shared and the journey becomes something sacred.

Lent also sharpens our commitment to covenant. Living Te Tiriti and honouring He Whakaputanga is not symbolic language for reports; it is daily practice. It shapes how you share power, how you steward resources, how you imagine the future. It calls you to humility and courage at the same time.

So as you move forward, hold your work lightly. Hold your relationships tightly. Hold the Gospel firmly. Pray first. Listen well. Choose connection over isolation.

The measure of this year will not only be balanced budgets or completed tasks. It will be seen in stronger trust, safer communities, clearer governance, deeper partnership, and renewed hope.

You are not simply helping to manage an institution. Together, we are tending a movement. May Lenten season steady your spirit for the journey ahead.

**Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui.**

Grace and peace,

Tara



## Te Tiriti & He Whakaputanga: Why Covenant Still Shapes Our Common Home

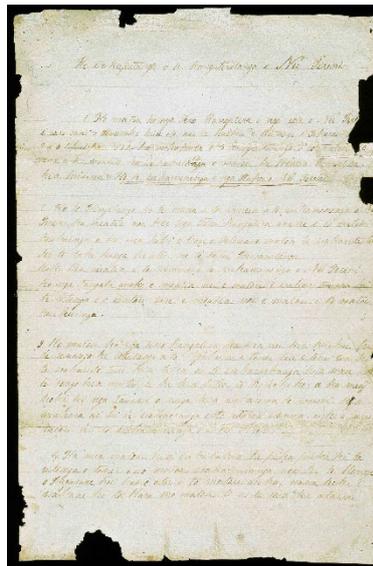
Tara Tautari

Over the past couple of months I have spoken at the Council of Conference and Vahefonua Tonga Stewards meetings. In both settings, very different in culture, age, and experience, one reality became uncomfortably clear: most of us do not have a strong understanding of He Whakaputanga or Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Even fewer could

confidently explain what they mean for our Church's bicultural journey.

That is not a small gap. It is a serious vulnerability.

We are living through a leadership transition. The generation who carried the bicultural journey - who fought for shared governance, who embedded partnership into our structures, who held the theological and covenantal depth of this work - are stepping back. We have inherited the structures. The question is whether we have inherited the conviction.



He Whakaputanga (1835) declared that Māori authority, rangatiratanga, already existed in this land. Aotearoa was not empty of governance or leadership. Five years later, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) established a framework for relationship: kāwanatanga, tino rangatiratanga, and oritetanga. Together they form the constitutional and moral foundation of this nation.

As Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, we have said that Te Tiriti guides how we undertake mission here. Not because it is politically convenient, but because covenant is Gospel language. Covenant speaks of promise, shared responsibility, and ongoing relationship. If we understand covenant with God but neglect covenant in this land, something in our theology fractures.

In some Pasifika spaces a sincere question is being raised: Why can't we simply be multicultural?

It is an understandable question. We are a richly diverse Church. Pasifika communities carry deep faith, sacrifice, and leadership. Multiculturalism sounds inclusive and generous.

But here is the firm truth: we cannot move to "multicultural" by stepping over bicultural.





Biculturalism in Aotearoa is not a preference. It is a covenantal foundation. Te Tiriti is an agreement between tangata whenua and the Crown. It establishes the ground on which everyone else stands. If we dilute that foundation in the name of multiculturalism, we do not become more just - we become less honest.

Multicultural reality sits within a bicultural covenant. It does not replace it.

To honour Te Tiriti is not to sideline Pasifika or any other community. It is to ensure that the house we all live in is structurally sound. When the foundation is clear and respected, multicultural expression can flourish with integrity. When the foundation is blurred, everyone competes for space.



*Vahefonua Tonga Stewards Gathering 2026*

The real challenge we face is not opposition. It is erosion.

At grassroots level, unfamiliarity is quietly setting in. Partnership risks becoming procedural. Shared governance risks becoming compliance. Bicultural language risks becoming symbolic rather than lived. When understanding thins out, integrity weakens.

Our rangatahi see this. They are asking hard questions about power, justice, and authenticity. If we cannot articulate why our bicultural partnership matters - biblically, historically, and practically - we will struggle to convince the next generation that it is more than policy.

This is a tipping point.

We can allow covenant literacy to fade into institutional memory, carried only by those who remember how it was built. Or we can intentionally rebuild it - through leadership formation, lay education, governance training, and honest conversation. Understanding He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti should not be specialist knowledge. It should be foundational for anyone entrusted with leadership in this Church.

The bicultural journey is not a Māori project. It is not about blame. It is not about nostalgia. It is about integrity. It is about whether we mean what we say when we speak of justice, reconciliation, and shared mission.

What we choose to deepen, or neglect, now will shape the Church our mokopuna inherit. This moment is not just serious. It will determine who we become.





## Methodist Mission Southern: New Beginnings: Coming and Going

Julie Roberts

As we step into a new year — and into the season of Lent (already!) — we find ourselves reflecting on both gratitude and new beginnings.

Firstly, thank you. Our recent sock fundraiser was a wonderful reminder of the strength of community and your commitment to our mahi. Every pair purchased, every word of encouragement, every act of support helps strengthen the wraparound care we offer rangatahi and young mums as they move toward independence. We are deeply grateful.

This week we say goodbye to a bubbly rangatahi from our Youth Transition House as they take the brave next step into independent accommodation. They are excited about the transition, but also honest about how much they will miss the house. From after-school walks to late-night chats in the living room, the friendships and homely atmosphere have meant a great deal. Leaving often means holding two truths at once — excitement for what lies ahead and sadness for what is ending. This young person is already focusing on next steps: rekindling old hobbies, reconnecting with friends, and setting clear, future-focused goals. It is a privilege to witness that growth and to walk alongside them in these final stages of transition.

Both of the young mums who recently moved into sustainable accommodation are thriving. Ensuring they are connected with the right services and strong support networks has been central to their success. Establishing that foundation before they leave is key — no one flourishes alone. Another resident who moved out at the start of January was initially apprehensive. With reassurance and conversation, they are now settled and embracing their independence with confidence. With many achievements behind them and a clear vision for their future, they are stepping forward with courage.

As Lent begins, we are reminded that growth often involves release — letting go of one season to enter another. The Psalmist writes, “The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore” (Psalm 121:8). For our rangatahi, there is much coming and going — departures filled with hope, and arrivals shaped by courage. We trust that in each step, they are accompanied.

Thank you for being part of that accompaniment — through prayer, generosity, and encouragement. Your support helps make these new beginnings possible.

If you’d like to help provide stability and care for more young people, please consider becoming a regular donor. Even a small monthly gift can make a lasting difference.

- Visit [mmssouthern.org.nz/donate](https://mmssouthern.org.nz/donate)
- Or talk to us about other ways to get involved.

**Be part of our story, our work, and our community.**

To receive our monthly e-newsletters or find out more, contact Julie on **027 267 8140** or [email](#), and follow us on our social media channels.





## Lay Preaching Matters

Viv Whimster (Convenor) & Ngaire Southon (Co-convenor)

### Lead Worship 1 and 2

Lead Worship 1 and 2 continue to be available to teach basic lay preaching skills, biblical background and theology. This course is particularly suited to those exploring a call to lay preaching and those already beginning to lead worship who wish to extend their skill base.

Lead Worship 1 is being offered as monthly

zoom sessions on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 25 February to 25 November 2026 from 7.30 – 8.45pm. These teaching sessions are enhanced by linking each participant with a mentor and by encouraging participants to create a portfolio to accompany learning and so build a resource for ongoing use.

Each session has material to read ahead of time, which will be sent out a week or two beforehand. Ngaire or Viv (contact details below) look forward to receiving registrations from those interested so that we can connect you with a suitable mentor, pass on the zoom link and circulate the background reading.

Wednesday, 25 February Introduction  
Wednesday 25 March Profile of a Worship Leader  
Wednesday, 22 April Resources of the Church Year  
Wednesday, 27 May Music in Worship  
Wednesday, 24 June The Language of public worship  
Wednesday, 22 July Prayer in public worship  
Wednesday, 26 August Culture and worship  
Wednesday, 23 September Growing in faith  
Wednesday, 28 October Creativity in worship  
Wednesday, 25 November Theology in worship

Please also contact us even if you would just like to know more, or if a local presbyter or experienced accredited Lay Preacher is interested in running a face-to-face course locally. Viv Whimster [email](#), 07 578 6056, 021 137 2349 or Ngaire Southon [email](#), 07 578 7119, 021 0224 5165

Satisfactory completion of the course is measured by attending the sessions, meeting monthly with a mentor and gathering reflections on the course and relevant resources into a portfolio. Groups have started at:  
Rangiora-Woodend – with Margaret ([email](#)) to register,  
Upper Hutt - with Kolotau Ahokava ([email](#)).

More information about the Network and details of our next open general zoom meeting may be found in our newsletter, available from the MCNZ website via this link: [Click here](#).





## James and Martha Trounson Benevolent Trust Fund

Mary West

The Trustees of the James and Martha Trounson Benevolent fund remind you of the availability of this fund when Parish members experience unexpected financial crisis.

- The 2026 Trounson application form is available on the Methodist website
- During 2026 the Acting Convener for this trust fund is Judy Pope. Her contact address is on the 2026

application form

- Mary West has retired from this Trust fund.
- Application for assistance must be made by the Presbyterian-Deacon-Synod Superintendent-or recognized Lay leader in a parish that has no stationed presbyter.
- This fund is available for members of Methodist parishes and CV parishes which have active methodist involvement.

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## 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](#) 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:** [Click here](#)

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

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

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## Pastoral care training for your Synod

Silvia Purdie

Greetings and Happy New Year to Synod and Methodist resource people around the motu.

I am delighted to be bringing to the wider church this year a top quality programme of training opportunities, mostly online and working with Aotearoa's best trainers. I invite you to put in your calendar, website and newsletters information about these events coming up.

The full programme is at: [Click here](#)

Here are brief event descriptors and images. Please let me know if you need a different image format.

### **God is at work: Solution Focused Pastoral Care**

Monday 16 February, 10am-12pm online seminar.  
with Matt Cameron

Don't get bogged down in people's problems; instead help them identify God's hand at work in their lives. This 2-hour training is for anyone who offers pastoral care, providing a Bible-based, adaptable and research-proven framework to move quickly into equipping people for positive change.

Cost: \$50 (subsidy available)

Register: [Click here](#)

I am delighted to be partnering with Richard Black to offer a free webinar - highly recommended for everyone in pastoral ministry:

**The Pastoral Trap:** Free webinar on Tuesday 17 February at 11am, from Richard Black, Thriving Churches HQ

The biggest ministry trap pastors and churches fall into that increases fatigue and reduces effectiveness... and how to break free so both can flourish. In this online presentation, Richard Black unpacks the most common pitfalls that limit pastors and churches, drawing on years of clinical work with pastors and his postgraduate research. Discover how to lead more healthily, minister from your calling and giftedness, and mobilise your church to fulfil God's purpose.

Register: [Click here](#)

There is still time to register for this training in Hoarding Disorder, which is a growing problem for those who do pastoral visiting and home-based care.

### **Hoarding: What you need to know**

An introduction to Hoarding Disorder, by Maire Joy Barron  
Thursday, 29 January, 10am-12pm.

Why do some people get buried under a mountain of stuff? How can we respond as care professionals to people caught in hoarding? Join NZ's leading expert in hoarding disorder, Maire Joy Barron, to understand how hoarding can be a trauma response, and to learn effective ways to support people with empathy, safety and care.

Cost: \$55

Register: <https://events.humanitix.com/hoarding-what-pastors-and-counsellors-need-to-know>

Please also note that we are starting a new national network for church leaders and pastors with a heart for mental health. Open invitation to a [Mental Health Forum](#) on 10 March at 3pm.





South Island Methodist Synod - *Te Hinota Weteriana o te Waipounamu*



## Save the date!!

### 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 8 motel suites at \$150/night at The Grange Boutique B&B and Motel, that is a 270m walk to Aldersgate. These are available on a first-come basis and need to be confirmed by the end of March. If interested, please email Dale at [superintendent.sis@methodist.org.nz](mailto:superintendent.sis@methodist.org.nz)

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





## Parish Strategy Workshop for all church leaders

Rev Dale Peach

... open to anyone in the Connexion ...

**Sunday 8 March 2pm to 4pm and Monday 9 March 9am to 3.30pm**

At the Aldersgate Centre, 309 Durham Street, Central Christchurch

Monday - Morning Tea and Lunch provided - \$20 per person

Cost - \$50 per parish (negotiable) + \$20 per

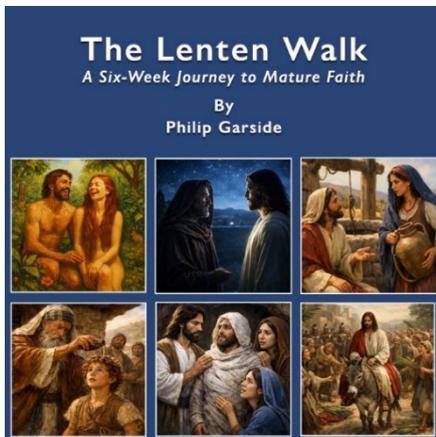
person for lunch

### **Parish Strategy Workshop:** Planning to Make a Difference in the Real World

This bespoke workshop will train ministers and lay leaders on how to facilitate discussions within your parish that will result in realistic strategies that make a difference in the complex context in which we currently find ourselves. You will be introduced to a simple but effective 3-step strategic framework: beginning with the end in mind; building on strengths; and being alert to emerging opportunities. You will also be offered, and have the chance to practice, simple tools to help lead each step in your own parish setting.

This interactive workshop will be led by Garth Nowland-Foreman, a director of [LEAD Centre](#) for Not for Profit Governance & Leadership, and a lay leader among Durham Street Methodists.

If intending to attend – please register with Dale Peach – South Island Synod Superintendent – [email](#)– by Tuesday 3 March.



## The Lenten Walk

Philip Garside

### Looking for a local Lent Study resource?

Try **The Lenten Walk: A Six-Week Journey to Mature Faith** by Philip Garside

Reimagine Lent as a transformative spiritual journey, through honest reflection, sacred storytelling, and radical love using this **digital resource** – only \$29.00.

Full details: [Click here](#)

Purchase and download today.



## World Day of Prayer 2026

Lynne Scott

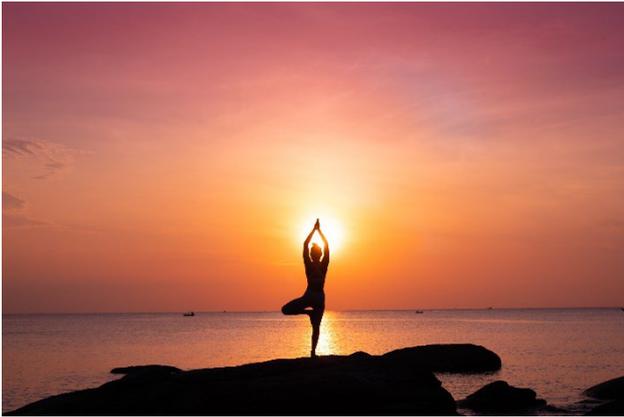
FRIDAY 6 MARCH 2026

### “I Will Give You Rest: Come”

Programme written by the World Day of Prayer Committee of Nigeria

**You are invited to join in worship and fellowship**

[Find a Service](#)



## Meditation

The Connexional Office

### Before We Pray

Quiet your body. Let your breathing slow.  
Release the weight you are carrying in your shoulders.  
Unclench your jaw. Soften your hands.

Let the noise within you settle like silt in still water.  
Beneath the surface, something steady remains.  
Listen there.  
God is already speaking.



## Prayer Focus

The Connexional Office

### A Lenten Prayer for Aotearoa

God of this long white cloud,  
of restless seas and folded ranges,  
of tī kōuka bending in the wind  
and rivers that remember their beginnings  
We come to you in this season of Lent  
walking the whenua that holds our stories.

As the tides move in and out along our coasts,  
teach our hearts the rhythm of returning.  
As the ngahere stands patient through storm

and drought,  
teach us to stay faithful without hardening.

Where we have rushed ahead of your Spirit,  
slow us.  
Where we have held tightly to comfort,  
loosen us.  
Where we have wounded this land or one another,  
turn us again toward covenant and care.

In the quiet spaces  
on the marae at dawn,  
in the hush before the southerly rises,  
in the stillness of a small chapel  
meet us.

Like the tūī who sings even in winter,  
let praise rise from lean places.  
Like the seeds buried beneath autumn soil,  
let repentance become renewal.

God of Aotearoa,  
as we journey these forty days,  
strip away what is not love.  
Deepen what is.

May our fasting make room for justice.  
May our prayer ready us for partnership.  
May our giving restore balance.





And when Easter light touches  
mountain peak and harbour edge,  
find us ready  
clear-eyed, open-handed,  
walking gently on your earth.  
Āmine.

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