



March 2025



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

The Connexional Office

Please send your articles to [reception@methodist.org.nz](mailto:reception@methodist.org.nz)



## Remember in your Prayers

The Connexional Office

It is with deep sadness that we inform the Connexion of the passing of Rev. Graeme Russell White, who passed away on Thursday, 27 February, at North Shore Hospital.

Graeme candidated for ministry at the Whangārei Conference in 1972, the same year the Church celebrated 150 years of Methodism in New Zealand. He was part of the first intake of Methodist students at St John's Theological College in 1973. In 1976, he was appointed on probation to Balclutha, a shared Methodist and Presbyterian ministry, and was ordained in

November of that year.

Throughout his long years of ministry, Graeme faithfully served in a range of appointments across Aotearoa, beginning in Balclutha (1976–79), followed by Willowby in the Ashburton Circuit (1979–85) and New Brighton Union Parish (1985–93). He then ministered at Whangaparāoa (1993–99) before undertaking supply ministry at Kingsland for 10 weeks, followed by the remainder of 1999 at Takapuna. In 2000 he moved to Te Atatū Union Parish where he remained until 2012.

Beyond his parish appointments, Graeme was deeply committed to the broader work of the Church, actively serving in Synod leadership and Connexional roles throughout his ministry. He spent 10 years as Journal Secretary at Conference, contributed as a member of the PAC Media and Communications Committee and the Mission Resourcing Board, and served as Synod Secretary for one year in North Canterbury and four years in Auckland. From 2020 to 2021, he held the position of Auckland Synod Superintendent. Additionally, he served as District Candidates Convenor in both South Canterbury and North Canterbury, providing support and guidance to those discerning a call to ministry.

Graeme had a lifelong commitment to ecumenical ministry, spending 24 years in union parishes or shared ministries and six years on the Standing Committee of UCANZ (2005–11). He contributed significantly to the work of Joint Regional Committees (JRCs), serving on the



South Canterbury, North Canterbury, and Combined Auckland JRCs, and acting as Secretary of the Auckland JRC for five years. His ecumenical engagement extended to Clutha, Christchurch, and Auckland Presbyteries, where he actively participated in various committees.

Graeme’s dedication, wisdom, and service have left a lasting impact on the Church and all those who journeyed alongside him. We give thanks for his faithful ministry and ask for prayers of comfort for his family, friends, and parish communities.

Ngā manaakitanga

**Rev Tara Tautari** | General Secretary

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death of Su'a Malaeloa Vili, retired Lay Minister and 50 years lay preacher award recipient at the Middlemore Hospital on Sunday 23rd February 2025.

Su'a Malaeloa Vili was appointed Lay preacher on the 12th of June 1970 in the Methodist Church of Samoa. He arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand on the 15th of October 1972. He was a member of the Methodist Church of New Zealand /Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa Ponsonby from 1973- 1977, Onehunga 1978-1983, and Mangere Central, Bader Drive from 1984 to the time of his death.

He was appointed and served as Lay Minister from 2000 until his retirement in 2020.

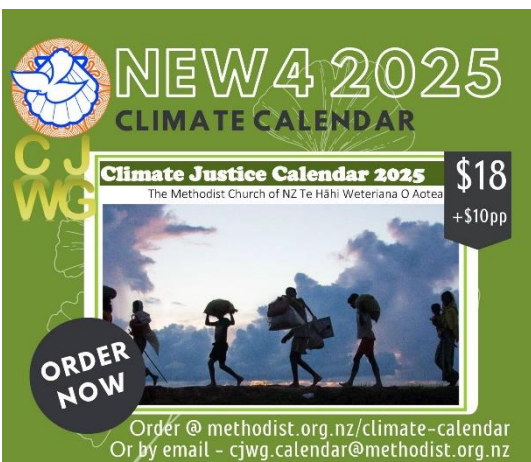
Su'a Malaeloa Vili is survived by his wife Faimanifo Vili, seven children (5 girls and 2 boys) as well as twenty-two (22) grandchildren.

There will be a Family Service on Sunday 2nd March at 10am at the Mangere Methodist Church, 40 Bader Drive, Mangere central at 10am.

The final service to honour and celebrate the life of Su'a Malaeloa Vili will be held at Mangere Methodist Church 40 Bader Drive, Mangere Central on Monday 3rd March 2025, at 10 am. This service will be followed by burial at the Manukau Memorial Garden.

Ngā manaakitanga

**Rev Tara Tautari** | General Secretary



**Connexions update**

Marion Hines

**These are now sold out.** Thank you for your support and enjoy the monthly information and suggested activities for your church.

**New leadership for Working Group**

At our annual planning meeting last month we appointed Mark Gibson and Iriana Rountree as Co-Convenors of our group. Mark and Iriana will be our Co-Convenors for 2025/26. This will enable our bi-cultural journey to be celebrated with agenda setting being a consultative process between the two partners.

**Climate-induced Displacement and Migration Policy**

A major focus for our work this year will be to finalise a policy around climate-induced migrants. This work is being led by Dr Elisapesi Havea.





The idea of developing the climate-induced migrant policy emerged from the 2021 Conference workshop facilitated by the Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG). In these group discussions, four main action plans were proposed by the CJWG based on feedback from Conference members, and developing a policy on climate-induced displacement and migration was one of them.

Feedback on the draft policy will be sought from all Synods and Rohe before a final draft is submitted for Conference approval in 2025.

**CJWG membership for 2025:**

Mark Gibson, Iriana Rountree, Gillian Laird, Joeli Ducivaki, Elisapesi Havea, George Zachariah, Peter Lane, Alilia Molitika, Siniva Isaia, Siutaisa Tukutau and Marion Hines.

Enquiries: [marionhines@xtra.co.nz](mailto:marionhines@xtra.co.nz) or Ph **021 053 2053**.



**Building Security and Arsons**

Wendy Anderson

Seven churches were targeted in an arson spree in Masterton that occurred in the early hours of the morning on Saturday 22 February 2025. This was not only devastating for the national churches involved, but also effected the wider community as well.

Four churches sustained moderate to significant damage. Another three buildings were also targeted, but sustained minor damage.

The Methodist Church is a partner in a uniting church that sustained minor damage. This church was the least effected of those that caught fire, with damage estimated to cost \$40,000 to repair.

It is a good time to focus on building security, and what you can do to help prevent damage. When leaving your premises ensure the building is secure, fire and security alarms are set, appliances and taps are turned off. Keep bins, skips and property away from the exterior walls of the church and hall and where possible secure to a post or permanent fixture away from the buildings. Bins, boxes etc can be used to gain access into the building or start a fire.

Our policy, like most insurance companies has an un-occupancy exclusion. The Policy will not provide cover on buildings not used for over 60 days, unless agreed by the insurer. Please advise the Connexional Office if you have a building vacant for over 60 days, and include plans for the building in the future.

Concordia, our Underwriting Agent has produced a number of risk management documents including:

- Arson Prevention
- Building Security
- Electrical Safety
- Fire Prevention
- Open Church Security
- Storm Protection
- Thermographic Imaging

The documents and a video on Managing Arson Risk for Churches are available on the Concordia [website](#).





**Creating an Image to use in Worship with ChatGPT AI**



**A weekly blog of Creative Ideas for Leading Worship**

**Singing Waiata in English-language services**



**A weekly blog of Creative Ideas for Leading Worship**

**Are you looking for Creative Ideas for Leading Worship?**

Philip Garside

Check out Wellington Lay Preacher, Philip Garside’s free weekly Worship Outside the Box blog posts. You can find them in the Worship Blog section of his [website](#).

Recent popular posts include: Singing Waiata in English-Language Services and Creating an Image to use in Worship with ChatGPT AI.

Try out one of these ideas with your congregation this Sunday!

**Support Lifewise on One Good Kiwi – Help Us Get Those Green Tokens!**

Cha Clarino

Lifewise has been selected as one of the charities to receive a share of \$100,000 through ONE NZ’s One Good Kiwi donation platform. Look for our [video](#) and send tokens our way! The more green tokens we get, the bigger our share of the \$100k. Every green token makes a difference in the lives of those we support. Let’s come together as a faith community and help Lifewise continue its vital work.

We’re excited to feature Kelvin Andrews, our new Merge Café chef, in the campaign video! Kelvin brings 35 years of global culinary experience, having worked as a national support chef for the NZ Defence Force and in kitchens around the world. Now, he’s using his incredible skills to serve up nourishing, delicious meals at Merge Café.

Thank you for your valuable support of our mission.





### Methodist Social Services Trust Hamilton

Mereana Rewh

#### 2025 Champions of HMSS

#### Wendy & John Hit Major Milestones!

What’s better than 20 years of dedication? How about 30 more! HMSS is buzzing with gratitude as we celebrate Wendy Nickalls, our super committed Coordinator of 20 years and John Berry, our Indoor Sports legend of 30 years.

Wendy keeps our programs running like a well-oiled machine, while John brings the energy, keeping our sports crew active and thriving. Their combined 50 years of service have shaped HMSS into the community powerhouse it is today.

So, let’s give them a massive high five, air fist bump, or victory dance—because they truly deserve it! A huge thanks to Wendy and John for their epic contributions- you both make the world and HMSS a better place



### Royal Commission of Inquiry into Covid-19 Lessons Learned

Trudy Downes

The reports of Phase One of Te Tira Ārai Urutā – the Royal Commission of Inquiry into COVID-19 Lessons Learned has now been published and Phase Two is now open for submissions.

The Phase One submissions, reflections, insights and perspectives were helpful in shaping the lessons

learned and recommendations made by Phase One of the Inquiry. To read the Phase One reports, please visit the [reports section of the website.](#)

#### Public submissions for Phase Two

Phase Two of the Inquiry is now collecting further public submissions.

Phase Two is looking at key decisions made by the New Zealand Government in 2021-2022 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the focus is on key decisions relating to the:

- use of vaccines, including mandates, approvals, and safety
- national and regional lockdowns in late 2021
- testing, contact tracing, and other public health materials.

Submissions to Phase One of the Inquiry that include reflections on any of the above topics, will also be considered by Phase Two.





If you have anything you would like to tell the Inquiry covering the topics listed above, you may wish to make a submission to Phase Two by visiting [www.covid19inquiry.nz](http://www.covid19inquiry.nz) or by calling 0800 500 306. Submissions close at midnight on Sunday 27 April.

If you made a Phase One submissions but are not sure what your submission included, you can email [InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz](mailto:InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz) and they can send you a copy of your submission.

If you have any questions about the Inquiry's submissions process, please visit the '[Questions and Answers](#)' section on their website or contact [InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz](mailto:InquiryintoCOVID-19lessons@dia.govt.nz).

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## Lead Worship

Viv Whimster

For anyone interested in some basic training to lead worship in his/her own English-speaking congregation, the Network is running a second year of Lead Worship. Some experienced tutors and scholars will be presenting monthly zoom sessions on topics which include: biblical background, the bicultural journey, climate justice, and sermon preparation. These will be recorded and the link made available. The following week, there will be a second zoom session for further discussion. Both sessions will be open to participants who may choose to join one or the other, or both.

The first sessions on the **First Testament** will be led by **Rev Dr Lynne Wall** (followed by a discussion the following week) at **7.30 pm** on **Wednesdays March 26 (April 2), April 30 (May 7), May 28 (June 4), June 25 (July 2)**.

**For more information or to register and receive the zoom link please contact :**

Viv Whimster [vjwhimster@gmail.com](mailto:vjwhimster@gmail.com), 07 578 6056, 021 137 2349 or Ngaire Southon [ngaire@southon.net](mailto:ngaire@southon.net) .

For those interested in national accreditation or further study, we recommend taking Trinity College papers for the Certificate in Lay Preaching, and completing the accreditation process outlined in [Information Leaflet #153](#).



## Fosna

Friends of sabeel north america  
A Christian Voice for Palestine.

### Four Delegations to Palestine

One of the most important ministries of FOSNA and our friends at the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem is our collective work to take leaders on delegations to the Holy Land.

In May and June of 2025, we have four delegations traveling to Palestine for witness and solidarity tours with Sabeel. Are you interested in any of these delegations? Please reach out to the contacts below.





### US Christian Leaders Tour: May 1-9

Join regional, national, and organizational Christian leaders on a delegation to visit Palestinian Christian communities and build relationships across global lines of difference.

This ecumenical trip already has 9 delegates from 5 Christian denominations, with hopes for a delegation between 12-15 leaders.

Cost: \$2700, including flights. Small scholarships available.

Interested in this trip? Email [johnnoble@fosna.org](mailto:johnnoble@fosna.org).



### Young Adult Delegation: May 20-28

Westminster Presbyterian Church of Tiburon, California and the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem (together with FOSNA) are partnering to host a trip to the Holy Land in May 2025.

This trip is for young adult ages 19-26, with opportunities to serve, pray, and worship alongside Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers.

Cost: \$2300, including flights.

Interested in this trip? Fill out the [inquiry form](#) or the [Sabeel interest form](#).



### Seminary Faculty Delegation Summer 2025



### Seminary Faculty Delegation

Join Sabeel on a 10-day delegation to Palestine/Israel. This special delegation is designed for university and seminary faculty who have interest in solidarity and accompaniment work.

Delegates can expect to delve into the rich and diverse theological reflections of Palestinian Christians, learning from local theologians and community leaders. We will also explore critical current issues through the lens of Palestinian Liberation Theology. Cost: \$1600, not including flights. Scholarships available through Sabeel's Naim Ateek Fund.

Join Sabeel on a 10-day ecumenical delegation to Palestine/Israel. This special delegation is designed for seminary faculty and leaders across North America who have experience or interest in solidarity and accompaniment work. Together, we will explore Palestinian Christian theology and use this shared space to transform our knowledge, exchange information, and build networks.

- Purpose**  
The delegation's primary purpose is to:
- Immerse participants in the lived experiences and theological perspectives of Palestinian Christians.
  - Facilitate robust information sharing and network building among seminary faculty.
  - Equip faculty and seminary leaders with firsthand experiences of accompaniment and solidarity in Palestine/Israel, enabling them to bring these lessons back to their classrooms and students.

\$1500 per person (includes accommodation, on the ground transportation, visa costs, and food; does NOT include airfare)  
The Sabeel Naim Ateek Fund is available to help cover \$800 of costs per person.  
June 1-10, 2025

Interested in this trip? [Fill out the Sabeel interest form.](#)



### Come and See, Go and Tell

The Palestine Justice Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is sponsoring a delegation to Palestine/Israel from June 16-26, 2025 hosted by our partner, Sabeel. This solidarity pilgrimage will include visits with Christian congregations, leaders of denominations, human rights groups, site visits with local communities, and Muslim and Jewish partner organizations.

The Palestine Justice Network of the PC(USA) is sponsoring a solidarity delegation hosted by Sabeel Center for Ecumenical & Liberation Theology.

If you are interested in being a part of this important trip, email [info@thePJN.org](mailto:info@thePJN.org).

Interested in this trip? Email [info@thePJN.org](mailto:info@thePJN.org) and [fill out the Sabeel interest form.](#)





## Methodist Mission Southern

Julie Roberts

### Lenten Landscapes: Finding Strength in the Wilderness

Lent is a season that draws us into the wilderness—a place of struggle, searching, and deep reflection. The wilderness is often where people encounter moments of grace—through kindness, resilience, and the quiet presence of those who walk alongside them.

While our young people may not be looking for faith in the traditional sense, they do find a sense of belonging, renewal, and hope in the Youth

Transition Houses. In moments of support, in the shared laughter over a meal, in the persistence of a young mother finding a home, we see glimpses of something greater at work.

This past month, our Youth Transition Houses in Waihōpai and Ōtepoti and Waihōpai Young Mums' House have been landscapes of both challenge and transformation, where young people continue to navigate their own paths through the wilderness of the world.

At the Youth Transition Houses, two residents reached milestones worth celebrating—one secured a job, and another returned to schooling with a renewed sense of purpose. Their journeys have not been easy, marked by uncertainty and setbacks, but they have persevered. To honour their achievements, we shared a meal together—sushi, fruit, and jelly—simple sustenance that reminded us that even in the wilderness, we are nourished by the support of those around us.

The physical landscape of Ōtepoti's Youth Transition House has also been transformed. With support from the Rule Foundation, residents had input into brightening up the lounge, making it a space of warmth and belonging. The addition of donated furniture from Crown Relocations further reinforced this sense of renewal. Like the barren places that bloom after rain, the house has become a reflection of the growth taking place within its residents.

Resourcefulness is often key to survival in the wilderness, and this was on full display when we received a large donation of crumbled biscuits. Rather than letting them go to waste, one resident turned them into the base for a homemade strawberry cheesecake — a creative act of making something beautiful out of what seemed broken. This dessert became a celebration of their return to study, a small but meaningful reminder that, even in the face of difficulties, renewal is possible.

Over at the Young Mums' House, the transition back into daily routines has been both rewarding and exhausting. The shift from holiday mode into school and daycare rhythms has been a challenge for our young mums, much like finding a steady path through rugged terrain. Yet, step by step, they are finding their way.

A standout success this month has been Splash Palace, where our mums and their babies have been enjoying the opportunity to swim. Thanks to funding from Active

Southland, our residents have had access to the pool, offering both fun and an important life skill for their pepi. Encouraging confidence in the water is so valuable, and we are pleased to now offer ongoing support for swimming lessons, ensuring these little ones continue to thrive.

Perhaps the hardest landscape to navigate this month has been housing. One young mother applied for over 25 houses before she finally secured a home. Each rejection was another dry and desolate stretch of road, but she refused to give up. Her story is one of perseverance—of holding faith even when the promised land seems unreachable. Now, as she steps into her new







where, we celebrate her strength and determination, knowing that she has carved a new path forward for her whānau.

Lent reminds us that the wilderness is both a place of struggle and a place of transformation. It is a space where we are tested, but also where we grow. In the stories of our young people and young mothers, we see this journey unfold—step by step, challenge by challenge, always moving toward hope.

Visit our website to set up a regular donation or find out more about the Mission's work.

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

Please contact [Julie Roberts](#) to receive our monthly e-newsletters and connect with us on our various social media channels.



### St Marks Hall CNR Barrington & Somerfield

Fish and Chips

For more info contact Rev. Andrew Donaldson at 027 428 7356





## Sister Eveleen Retreat House

Antje Duda

### **A Pilgrim's Soul – A Weekend Retreat**

*"A pilgrim is a person who prays with their feet."* – Edward Hays

Pilgrimage is not only about distant journeys—it is also an inner movement of the heart.

You are invited to **Sister Eveleen Retreat House** for a weekend of reflection, creativity, and prayer,

exploring what it means to walk as a pilgrim in daily life.

**Date:** 2–4 May 2025, Sister Eveleen Retreat House, Sumner - [More Info and Registration](#)

