



NZMWF Executive Team Visit Ōtautahi

NZMWF National President Lesieli Pope and seven members of her Auckland-based executive team recently visited Ōtautahi where they shared hospitality, prayer, devotions, ideas and worship as they connected with Methodist communities in the Canterbury region.

The colourful delegation, dressed in one of the six Pasifika custom-designed outfits that have been a key identifying feature of the current executive team of Tongan women, arrived on Saturday 22 March, and returned to Tāmaki Makaurau on Monday evening 24 March. The group spent

Sunday with the Christchurch South Tongan Parish (Kosipeli) congregation leading worship, singing hymns and sharing food and fellowship.

The next day after a visit to the Connexional Office, morning tea with staff, and a tour of the adjoining archives building Kei Muri Māpara, hosted by archivist Katherine Doig, the group headed to the Christchurch West Parish, Church Corner. On arrival they were warmly welcomed by North Canterbury District President and Te Taha Māori representative, Roslyn (Roz) Wilkie, who spoke about the long social justice tradition within Methodism. Other guests included Christchurch West minister Dr Lucy D'aeth, members of the parish and New Zealand Methodist Fellowship members from around the region.

NZMWF President Lesieli Pope was joined by Dr. Soana Muimuiheata (National Secretary), Selina Lavaka (National Diaconate Link), Tokanga Filiai (the self-titled Money Queen), Saloni Manase (Uniting Congregation link), Ofa Matakaiongo (National Liaison link), Melevea Tupou (National Mission link), and 'Iunisi Vaitohi (National Council of Women representative).

In an initiative that is unique to the Canterbury district, men are included in fellowship gatherings and several attended the event at Christchurch West. Lesieli and her team enthusiastically embraced the concept, advising they will be taking the idea back to Auckland for discussion with other fellowships. After lunch, Dr Soana led devotions, drawing on Romans 12 to inspire attendees to be transformed by God's grace and love as she reflected on her 43-year faith journey. After song, prayer, and group introductions, Lesieli extended special thanks to the North Canterbury District Executive team, and past members of the National and international NZMWF executive representatives, Lynne Scott and Valmai Horlor.

In sharing an overview of the work and goals of the current NZMWF executive, Lesieli emphasised the importance of maintaining member numbers and finding means of keeping fellowship alive. Currently there are nine active districts throughout the motu and North Canterbury is the only one in the South Island. Given the dedication, efforts, and commitment of the many generations of members over the years who have contributed to a strong legacy of NZMWF in Aotearoa, Lesieli urged those gathered to pray for continued growth and membership.



Pasifika parishes are bucking the trend of declining numbers. Tongan NZMWF membership in Tāmaki Makaurau has been steadily increasing. The executive team has been meeting with the 20 Tongan congregations in the region, sharing fellowship and delivering presentations and programmes designed specifically for women, with a focus on young and older adults.

Fijian NZMWF executive member Unaisi Tikoinaka contributed to the conversation from a Wasewase perspective. Increasing numbers of Fijian women regularly gather for enthusiastic fellowship, however there is no engagement from the men in the parishes. Una said, “It may be cultural. We haven’t reached the stage of our men participating yet but we are growing our women’s participation. We extended an invitation for men to join our World Day of Prayer services, but no one came.”

Supporting Special Projects

During discussion regarding NZMWF special projects and how those projects are selected, Lesieli confirmed NZMWF has had a long-term partnership with Christian World Service, collaborating with partners in global outreach. This year funds have been provided to enhance the work of CWS partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR). providing care and counselling for refugee women and children in Jordan.

Ronald McDonald House Charities is the National recipient of fund-raising efforts this year with funds used to support family accommodation units in Tamaki Makaurau, Pōneke and Ōtautahi, retreat facilities in Rotorua and family rooms in hospitals in Tamaki Makaurau, Ōtautahi and Waihōpai. In addition to the special projects, NZMWF administer scholarship and grant funds supporting women and girls across the Smethurst Trust and the annual Friendship House scholarship.

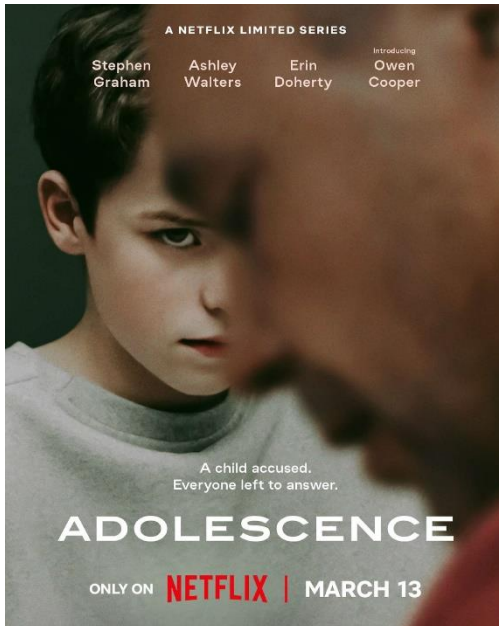
Diversify to Survive

The concept of involving men was just one idea mooted to grow dwindling fellowships. Another suggestion was to involve National Council of Women in events via remote online access, thereby eliminating travel as a barrier to participation.

Despite the challenges of maintaining and growing Tauwiwi fellowship numbers, the energy and enthusiasm of the Pasifika members is evident and contributing to the spiritual and social life of its members and supporting the work of the church and its mission, here and abroad.

In April Lesieli and her team will travel to Dargaville to meet with members of the Upper North District to spread faith and fellowship as they work to revive and renew numbers in the region.

NZMWF Vice President Simulata Pope, is the convenor of a local arrangements committee currently working on planning and logistics for The World Assembly of Methodist and Uniting Women scheduled for 21 – 31 August 2026. The Due Drop Events Centre in Tāmaki Makaurau, the venue booked for the Assembly, has capacity for 3,000. Despite the work ahead, Lesieli and her team are excited by the fellowship opportunities the gathering offers as well as the economic benefits the gathering will bring to the region.



Not Algorithms but Love: The Church's Call in a Digital World

Rev Peter Norman, MCNZ Vice President.

After watching *Adolescence*, I was deeply moved by its raw portrayal of the struggles young people face today. It made me reflect on how the Methodist Church in Aotearoa responds to the complex world our youth inhabit. The confronting four-part Netflix series revealed the emotional turbulence of growing up online. *Adolescence* exposes how emojis are repurposed for incel culture and hate speech, and how social media algorithms nudge young minds toward polarisation and extremism.

Are we still longing for the past, hoping this digital reality might fade? That hope is understandable - but ultimately misplaced. We must meet these challenges head-on, with

open hearts, open minds, and open arms. Luke's Gospel tells us Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and found favour with God and people—a call to holistic growth: intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social. That same call is ours today, and we cannot fulfil it without embracing the reality of the world as it is.

AI is now part of daily life and rapidly reshaping every sphere—including the church. From Finland's AI-led worship services to AI confessionals in Switzerland, from tech leaders designing faith-based chatbots to pastors using AI to help craft sermons - this isn't the future, it's now. These global experiments show both the power and the limits of AI. While it can generate music, sermons, even a digital Jesus, it cannot offer true empathy. But neither should we dismiss it. Used wisely, AI can support ministry, widen access, and spark creativity. It must serve -not replace -our human and spiritual calling.

At the same time, the digital world is forming, and in some cases deforming, our youth. It's no longer enough for the Church to warn from the sidelines. We must get inside the code, speak the language, and build trust. Digital literacy and ethical awareness are now spiritual imperatives. The online space is a mission field, and our rangatahi need guides who walk with them, not above them. Meanwhile, many are quietly walking away from church - not from God, but from a version of faith that feels rigid, narrow, or disconnected. People are blending Christian practice with other spiritual pathways - Mātauranga Māori, mindfulness, te taiao, acts of justice and healing. Instead of resisting this, we're invited to see the Spirit at work in new forms, calling us into more fluid, inclusive, and grounded expressions of faith.

This moment also demands a deeper commitment to true bicultural partnership. Honouring Te Tiriti means more than surface acknowledgements - it calls us to weave Mātauranga Māori into the very fabric of who we are as Church. Not as an add-on, but as a foundation. Not to include, but to re-root. Not tokenism, but true transformation. Decolonising our theology invites us to rediscover the Divine, not as coloniser, but as Creator-in-relation, intimately tied to whenua and whakapapa, present in the breath of the land and the stories of the people.

And so the church is evolving; less about buildings, more about belonging. Our spaces are becoming hubs of community, creativity, justice, and care. Worship is no longer limited to Sunday morning in a pew. It's also happening online, in gardens, through art, activism, and shared meals. The church is where people gather to restore hope, express faith, and reimagine a better world.

Which brings us to the heart of it all. In te ao Māori, the word *awhi* speaks to something we deeply need right now. More than a hug, *awhi* is spiritual and communal support - holding someone in grief, walking with them in pain, standing beside them in hope. It is *aroha* and *manaakitanga* in action. And it is profoundly gospel. Jesus showed us this again and again; not with dogma, but with presence. Not with walls, but with welcome. Not with power, but with compassion.

In an AI-driven, screen-saturated, fast-changing world, we cannot forget this: what ultimately transforms lives is not technology, but connection. Not algorithms, but love. Not performance, but presence. *Awahi* is what keeps us human. It's what made Jesus compelling then, and it's what the world is still crying out for now. So as the digital tide rises and AI grows smarter, let our faith grow deeper. Let the church *awhi* this new world—with courage, with creativity, and with love that refuses to give up on anyone. Because this is not the end of the church—it's the next chapter. And the Spirit is already writing it.



AROUND THE CONNEXION



Myers Park Cottage Open for Bookings!

Melinda San Diego, Methodist Alliance

On 19 February the local community gathered to celebrate the re-opening of the iconic Myers Park Cottage. This special event signified the beginning of a new era, as Auckland Council has awarded Lifewise responsibility to promote and manage the use of this fastidiously restored, treasured community space. The opening event included representatives from various community groups, associations, and local residents, all eager to see this

historic cottage renovated, and repurposed as a vibrant community hub.

The event commenced with a *hīmene* and *karakia* led by our Pou Manukura, Rev Dr Te Hira Paenga, followed by a warm welcome from Rev Otene Reweti of Ngāti Whātua. Lifewise Chief Executive, Haehaetu Barrett, reflected on the rich history of Myers Park Cottage – formerly known as the Myers Park Caretaker's Cottage – and its transformation to a space where local communities can gather, connect, *kōrero*, and flourish. The venue is already attracting interest from diverse groups and organisations, both as a place for one-off gatherings and for regular weekly meetings.

An Exciting New Chapter for a Cherished Community Space in Central Auckland

Nestled in the heart of Auckland's picturesque Myers Park, the kauri cottage was built in the 1850s by early French settler Charles de Thierry. Following a major 12-month renovation, the formerly dilapidated building has been faithfully restored to resemble its original architectural style – with modern heating, catering and bathroom amenities. It stands as a proud testament to Auckland's rich heritage. Under the stewardship of Lifewise Trust until 30 June 2028, Myers Park Cottage is available for hire by the wider community, local businesses, and residents. Lifewise operates the venue on a cost-neutral basis, with any revenue generated covering operational expenses and keeping the space accessible to all.



Empowering Transformation through Youth-Focused Special Services

Kuovatisi Uasi

The *Vahefonua Tonga O Aotearoa* organised a combined service for its parishes to start the Lent season for 2025. Promoting the theme “*Lelei ke liliu kā ‘oku fungani hake ke liukava: Don’t Just Change, Transform.*” This service was part of a recent programme dedicated to connecting and empowering Tongan youth.

On Sunday 9 March, the Fuakava Ta’engata ‘o Kenani, *Ōtāhuhu* Tongan Methodist Church, led by presbyter Rev Lute Pole Tu’uhoko, visited Pulela’ā New Lynn Tongan Methodist Church. The service inspired and led by Otahuhu youth started with praise and worship followed by a sermon with songs and prayers. The following Sunday, the Pulela’ā New Lynn Tongan Methodist Church service was hosted by the *Ōtāhuhu* Tongan Methodist Church with the same theme of promoting transformation and empowering connections for our youth. The service was led by Rev Ikilifi Pope, presbyter for the New Lynn Tongan Methodist congregation.

Combined youth groups participated in a special programme focusing on youth leadership facilitated by Sonia Pope, a Tongan psychologist and member of the New Lynn Youth group. Using scripture, groups delved into the transformative potential of a programme that is rooted in the core values of who they are as Tongans in Aotearoa and also as members of the Tongan Methodist Church. Sonia reminded participants that transformation starts with God. “As human beings we face struggles and it’s normal, but God hears our cries. He brings us comfort, he brings us peace and takes away the fear that you have in your soul. He also brings us hope.”

The social impact of this initiative, particularly in the context of young Tongans living in West Auckland and South Auckland, is significant in empowering their faith and in promoting their culture through language and values. Plans are in place for more combined youth programmes. Given the challenges faced by our young people as they navigate bicultural identities and societal pressures, programmes like this can support them holistically for their overall wellbeing mentally, physically, socially and spiritually.



CONTACT DETAILS

I welcome your feedback on content included in this publication.

Ngā mihi nui

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He Inoi Mō te Hunga Manene

Rev Keita Hotere

Our first Enabling Ministry Team (EMT) wānanga of the year delved into this year's church resource for Lenten studies, exploring Ruth 4, Psalm 137, and Matthew 25. The theme of 'climate-induced migration' sparked rich and meaningful discussions.

During our wānanga also unpacked Te Whakapono a ngā Apotoro, The Nicene Creed and began an exploration of the World Council of Churches resource 'Toward the Sixth World Conference on Faith and

Order', marking the '1700th anniversary of the 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea'.

These rich resources opened our eyes not only to the migration stories of the Pacific region but also the doctrinal migration brought through missionaries from the Northern hemisphere. The ecumenical work of Faith and Order, calling us to dialogue in common witness and service become ongoing conversations for indigenous communities globally who have been impacted by colonisation.

The resources become starting points to lively discussions and led our wānanga to wider discussions about our church's capacity in Aotearoa to support migrant communities and vulnerable workers. There were important questions raised which we could not answer. We acknowledged our limitations and failings as well as the visible signs of hope than can emerge when church communities unite to wānanga solutions.

Reflecting upon 'climate induced migration' and the Ruth narrative Tarati Tia shared, "How do you navigate the space when you are displaced? We are all impacted. When I think of climate induced displacement I am reminded of a friend of mine working in this space and the pastoral care he provides to RSE workers who have communication barriers because of their limited English. People who have been exploited, disorientated with their mana trampled. They have come here because of economic migration and the impacts are the same as those experiencing climate induced displacement.

Ruth was blessed because Naomi was her guide, her advocate and her translator. There are many RSE workers who have no advocates. They experience loss being separated from whānau and trauma and they have to deal with our government departments. Naomi was as a host country should be to refugees, migrants providing advocacy and guidance around the networks and support services available to any new migrant".

We discussed the displacement of whānau from Cyclone Gabrielle and the hope we would want our whānau to be cared for. Aroha ki te tangata featured as paramount, and the care provided for our people as children of God. It was important to reflect how we as Iwi and Hapū want to be heard by our local councils and government. Concluding words from elder Kuina Scrivener says, "As a church we do some but not enough. I know we can do more and our government should do much more'.



UCANZ Resources Available to All

Rev Andrew Doubleday, UCANZ Ministry Facilitator
UCANZ covers around 105 Co-operating Ventures nationwide. A weekly newsletter sent to each partner church contains valuable resources for worship leaders. The information is available to anyone who wishes to subscribe.

Every Tuesday morning, I send out a newsletter. It often contains UCANZ specific information, however it also includes links to two or three

articles on leadership, personal development and occasionally on spirituality. I read across a wide range of online magazines and try to choose the most relevant and sometimes simply interesting or 'left-field' articles. There is much crossover as far as leadership is concerned – what is true for the business world can be as applicable to the church.

I also prepare a YouTube homily related to the Lectionary Gospel reading for the coming Sunday. Trevor Hoggard has also been very faithful in providing his own – both these have links provided.

And there's more ... every week the Dunedin Diocese of the Anglican Church also posts a 15-minute discussion of that same Gospel reading between four theologian/practitioners. They call it 'Gospel Conversations' (I get to appear in it occasionally). This too is linked in the newsletter. The primary point of these links is to provide resources for worship leaders – they can provide ideas, be a basis for discussion and I'm aware of them simply being played on Sunday morning in some congregations where a 'preacher' is not available. Both CVs and 'pure' denominational churches can and do use them. Ka pai!

The newsletter with information, articles and links to gospel readings, sermons and discussions between theologians related to the liturgical calendar, is available to whomever would like to receive it (you don't need to be in a CV). If you later decide that it's not your thing or you have too many emails crowding your inbox, it can easily be cancelled.

UCANZ is the creation of five, now down to three, partner churches. Authority ultimately rests with the partner churches - on most issues at regional level – involving Bishops (Anglican), Executive Officers (Presbyterian), and Synod Superintendents (Methodist). Overarching issues (such as setting of overall levy rates, changes to Procedures etc) are negotiated at national level – initially between the respective partner General Secretaries. While we (UCANZ) often get to provide input, decisions are properly made by the partners.

My predecessors in UCANZ leadership were 'Executive Officers'. This implied, and clearly involved, an administrative function – primarily negotiating the payment of levies by parishes. The last Executive Officer, Rev Adrian Skelton, oversaw a system change which standardised much of that role. The UCANZ Standing Committee is committed to the ecumenical project, and when they took me on were clear that my role is primarily one of resourcing - not just CVs, but also the partner churches (assuming they want it!). So, here we are, happy to help where we can.



Donald Trump's Distorted Version of Christianity

Bill Peddie

When Hitler's storm troopers marched into battle, their belt buckles were engraved "*Gott mit uns*" (God with us). With WWII behind us and with the wisdom of hindsight, the storm troopers' presumption of God's blessing turned out to have been premature. America's leader appears to have a similarly distorted view of his actions supporting the word of God.

President Trump has always stressed his own good relationship with God, yet it is not always clear from the President's actions and decisions that such a busy chap has even had time to become acquainted with key teachings in the Good Book. Kindness to non-American victims appears foreign to Trump's current thinking. Shutting down most of the US foreign aid schemes and simultaneously closing the US Department of Education with their numerous programmes of assisting children with disabilities in the classrooms across the US hardly fits Biblical notions of love in action.

Further evidence that all might not be well with Trump's theological reasoning, came from his angry reaction to that now well-publicised sermon at the Washington National Cathedral, where Bishop Mariann Budde used a deliberate selection of Jesus' main teachings to advocate for a fairer attitude in the eviction of undocumented refugees. The bishop emphasised that true unity is not about conformity or victory over others, but rather about embracing and respecting differences. Her plea was for fostering a more humane attitude towards the refugees, staying focused on serving the common good. Anyone familiar with the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew or Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" would note that such teachings align with Jesus' call to love one's enemies.

Bishop Budde's words seem to have enraged the President whose own attitude to refugees is at odds with Jesus' exhortations to love one's neighbours regardless of their background. Part of the problem may be that in the President's mind the term "enemies" has morphed into "any who are not likely to support the President." The bishop's sermon clearly reflected Jesus' teaching in Luke 6:35, where he instructs us to love our enemies, do good to them, and tend to their needs without expecting to get anything back.

Bishop Budde was taking issue with the Trump stated aim to evict existing refugee families and questioned the wisdom of eviction of children awaiting clarification of citizenship. She challenged the President to face Jesus' call for the kind of unity that encompasses and respects differences, highlighting a need to express genuine care for one another even amidst disagreements. She urged for actions informed by prayer, emphasising that deeds matter more than words, and highlighting Jesus' message of love, mercy, and forgiveness.

To be fair to Trump, given his responsibilities, like many in this country he may not have gotten round to reading much of the New Testament. If the President's reading had only got as far as Old Testament teaching, perhaps he might have preferred to remind his followers that Leviticus 25. 44

(also in the Trump Bible) gives permission to buy slaves from nearby countries. If his thinking was back with the ancient Hebrew Biblical teaching, he may well be unaware that the changes that came with the New Testament might no longer support him if he were to claim Mexico or Canada as a source of slave labour.

At the same time, as President Trump is no doubt still wanting to sell his print edition of the Bible, it might be as well to remember not all the Old Testament laws appear to be on Trump's side. We might wonder for example if he were aware of the somewhat awkward Old Testament commandment about not committing adultery.

If we take President Trump at his word about following the Bible's teaching, all they had to do was choose the day more carefully. Accordingly, and following the teachings in the Trump Bible, Trump's guards should have been instructed to stop working on the Sabbath, along with everyone else including those pesky air safety controllers. The Trump Bible (Exodus Ch 35: verse 2) clearly states that those engaged in Sabbath-breaking work are committing a crime that requires death by stoning. If the Trump Bible is truly all that the President appears to claim, I assume that future assassins will wait for a Sabbath before making their next move ...

More seriously, we might pause to reflect on some key areas of disjunction.

1. Personal Conduct vs. Christian Ethics

- The Bible emphasises humility, honesty, and love for others. Trump, however, has been better known for inflammatory rhetoric, personal attacks, and dishonesty.
- His history includes multiple divorces, affairs, scandals, and crude comments, which contrast with Christian teachings on fidelity and purity.

2. Lack of Biblical Knowledge or Devotion

- When asked about his favourite Bible verse, Trump struggled to cite one, saying it was "too personal" (2015).
- He once referred to "Two Corinthians" instead of "Second Corinthians," suggesting unfamiliarity with basic Christian terminology.
- He has rarely been seen engaging in genuine worship or prayer outside of politically beneficial moments.

3. Policy vs. Christian Social Teaching

- **Immigration:** Surely separating children from parents at the border contradicts the biblical call to care for the stranger.
- **Wealth & Compassion:** Policies favouring the wealthy over the poor contrast with Jesus' teachings on economic justice.
- **Racial & Social Division:** His rhetoric on race and the treatment of minorities conflicts with Christian calls for unity and love.

In Summary

While Trump has courted evangelical support, his actions are often at odds with core Christian principles. This raises questions about whether his religious claims are based on sincere faith or political expediency. And according to the surveys, the President's strongest US support comes from fundamentalist, evangelical and Catholic conservatives.

Might this suggest an issue for the attention of our own Church leadership? At the very least we should encourage our church members to engage with current moral issues in a changing world.



The Metric of Smiles

In their latest donor appeal, CWS is emphasising the positive. by counting the smiles of those who your donations go to support.

The children in the image are enjoying street theatre in Gaza courtesy of our partner in Jordan, DSPR (Department of Service to

Palestinian Refugees), which is part of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches). The street theatre provides psychosocial support to children who are surrounded by a war that produces psychological trauma. Amidst this adversity, if DSPR can increase the occasions when children can be helped to smile – or better, to laugh – then they are undertaking a small but vital improvement in the quality of life of both the child and their family. It’s the metric of smiles at work.

This metric increases when the child is able to drink clean water, receive adequate food, have fun in a playground between school lessons, and whose home is safe at night.

Its been almost 80 years since Christian World Service was formed to represent the combined Christian love of New Zealand churches to help fund the recovery from the horrors of WWII. Today, CWS represents Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Quaker, Christian, and Uniting Churches to work with trusted partners across the globe, helping empower them to reduce the ravages of poverty and injustice in the lives of the most vulnerable.

Alongside the improvements we aspire to see made in the lives of the world’s most vulnerable, we want to suggest adding the “metric of smiles”. We perceive Jesus appreciated the importance of that metric as did the Biblical writers of old.



CARTOON



Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

Our regular cartoon from Jim, that finds the funny, and sometimes not so funny, side of faith.

“I guess this is what happens when we let AI pick the hymn numbers.”



ANZAC Day: Lest We Forget the Sacrifices of All

Susan Garwood, Presbyterian Research Centre Archives
2025 marks the 110th anniversary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand soldiers – the ANZACs – on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 and the 105th anniversary of ANZAC Day itself. Our thoughts typically go to the soldiers who fought in the wars; however it is important to also remember all those who supported the troops.

This group includes doctors, nurses, engineers, supply specialists, members of the NZ Cyclist Corps and the NZ Camel Company ... and the Army Chaplains. During the war, chaplains conducted religious services, offered spiritual guidance, provided pastoral care, officiated at burials, comforted the ill and dying, regardless of the soldier's faith.

David Craig Herron, New Zealand Army Chaplain 1916 - 1919

One such chaplain for whom the Presbyterian Research Centre Archives (PRC) has a significant collection of material, is The Very Reverend David Craig Herron, CBE. He was attached to the 2nd Battalion Otago Regiment and was awarded the Military Cross for his service in France in 1918. The collection includes many letters, testimonials, sermons, and diaries he kept of his time serving with the NZ Expeditionary Force in WWI. Through these words said by him and about him we begin to understand the role of the clergy during the war.

Part of what made Rev Herron exceptional was his ability to understand the soldiers' experience. In one of his sermons to the soldiers, delivered in 1916, Rev Herron said, "To a good many of you there was nothing attractive in this soldiering business. You were happy in your homes; you had a more or less definitive plan as to how you were going to spend your life. ... All that is now a thing of past history; you have made your sacrifice; you have handed over a great deal of your personal liberty; and many of you are feeling the strangeness and loneliness of totally new surroundings."

Lt. Colonel John McCrae wrote a testimonial letter for Rev. Herron. He said, "I was in command of the 2nd Bat. Otago Ret. We had the honour of having with us as Chaplin, David Herron. He had a wonderful personality which drew men towards him. He was absolutely fearless in speaking the truth to them when the occasion warranted it, yet without giving any offence. Perfectly devoted to his duties and the welfare of the men. ... He did excellent work in the battalion. Inspiring the men under the most difficult situations."

Serving as a Military Chaplain isn't filled with heroics. Rather their job was that of counsellor, friend, and encourager – supporting soldiers through their fear of what was to come and working to keep moral up during the quiet, slow, and boring parts of war. Helping men navigate loneliness, isolation from family and loved ones, and sadness at the loss of fellow soldiers all fall on the shoulders of the clergy.

This year on ANZAC Day, we take a moment to give thanks to the clergy who served and sacrificed for the men and women under their care.



Converting the World Maud Cannon – Dunedin to China

Rev Donald Phillipps

A 1909 history of the Yunnan mission in China states, “Slow and steady growth with little to show in the way of numerical results.” The success of Maud Dymond’s (née Cannon) 50-year mission supporting runaway slave girls in the region could not be captured in numbers of conversions. Measuring the success of mission today is just as difficult to define.

Maud Mary Cannon was born in Dunedin in 1867 to George and Catherine Jordan. Most of the family returned to Tasmania c1895. Maud, however, had become involved with the Dunedin Central Mission founded in 1890 by the newly appointed William Ready.

The Central Mission was part of the Bible Christian Church, a Methodist offshoot. A beginning had been made in Christchurch and Ready was one of several young men brought out in 1889 to enlarge their work. The Bible Christians were, essentially, an evangelistic movement, working more in country areas in the UK rather than in the cities. They thought of themselves as a missionary movement to the “dark and desolate parts.” An appeal by the China Inland Mission in 1885 to open a mission in China was taken up and Ready’s promotion of this enterprise appealed to Maud Cannon’s own sense of vocation. What she did was brave. In 1892 she went from Dunedin to the Yunnan region in south-west China, the most remote of all the provinces. She married Francis John Dymond, also a missionary, in 1894 and the couple remained in Yunnan until 1930 when they finally returned to the UK. Maud died in Bristol three years later.

Maud’s particular concern during her time in China was her work with runaway slave girls. A history of the Yunnan mission written in 1909 noted that every part of the work had the same story to tell. Slow and steady growth with little to show in the way of numerical results. Men and women missionaries had come and gone, some broken down and some already dead. There was preaching in the cities, schools had been founded and native teachers were being trained.

In that previous paragraph, two key words stand out: “numerical results.” That’s how missionary success was judged. But what do numbers mean? Is the size of a congregation at weekly worship the real measure of a mission’s value? This question is of undoubted relevance in our own time, as we watch Sunday worship within mainstream Christianity decline. How is the ‘effectiveness’ of the Gospel to be measured? Is it in terms of changed lives, as implicit in ‘conversion’? What is the significance of that special hour on a Sunday morning? It may be time for those of us for whom Sunday is still a special day of the week to engage in some honest reflection.

The words we use on a Sunday we may describe as comforting but we need to remember that implicit in that word is the idea of strengthening. In a world where the object of so many leaders appears to be the use of power to achieve personal or national ends, the fate of the powerless is increasingly endangered. Maud Cannon worked with runaway slave girls in Yunnan. What she did for them, rather than what she said to them, is her memorial. Who are the victims in our society? What can we do?