

TOUCHSTONE

E whaia ana te putaketanga o nga whakapono mo tenei ao hurihuri
EXPLORING FAITH ISSUES FOR TODAY



Methodist Conference celebrated the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Dame Rev Dr Phyllis Guthardt (top left) as well as the talents of its young people.

Conference celebrates its past and future

By Paul Titus

Methodist Conference is a time to both celebrate and deliberate.

The opening days of Conference celebrate the elevation of the Church's new officers and ministers, as well as the accomplishments of those retiring. Then, delegates face several days of deliberation and decision-making.

This year the presidential team of Rev Alan Upson and Lana Lazarus made celebration a key element of Conference 2009. They gave it the theme 'Celebrating God's presence'. In their presidential address, they recounted their personal experiences of God's presence and their vision of how we can live our lives with this in mind.

Their talk was rich in images – from Alan's depiction of John Wesley as the Methodist Church's Elvis, to Lana's description of her great, great grandmother, who joined Te Hahi Weteriana because it allowed her to hold onto some of her Maori beliefs.

Under Alan and Lana's leadership Conference celebrated creation and the vitality of young people, and this was reinforced by the morning worship sessions led by Taha Maori.

Many of the groups that make up the diverse family that is the New Zealand

Methodist Church had special things to celebrate this year.

Taha Maori celebrated Lana's induction to the office of vice president. By assuming office, Lana establishes a number of firsts – she is the first member of Taha Maori to be vice president, and she is the first Maori woman and first Maori layperson to hold office in a presidential team.

With the ordination of Rex Nathan, Taha Maori also celebrated receiving its first ordained presbyter in more than 30 years.

The women of the Church were in a celebratory mood because this year's Conference marks 50 years since the ordination of Dame Rev Dr Phyllis Guthardt in 1959. Phyllis was the first woman of any denomination to be ordained in New Zealand and she went on to become the Church's first woman president.

On the evening of Saturday, November 7th ordained women from the Methodist Church and other denominations gathered to mark the occasion and reflect on the ups and downs of their continuing journey in the Church.

Then, on the first business day of Conference, a service was held to celebrate the ministry of women presbyters. Along

with Dame Phyllis, Anglican Bishop Victoria Matthews addressed Conference about women in ministry. In her talk Victoria said that today it seems rather obvious to ordain women but 50 years ago it was not.

Lana says she was only able to briefly attend the Saturday evening event but the stories she heard impressed her. "It was amazing to hear the stories of the women who struggled to become presbyters. They faced obstacles not only within the Church but also in their cultures. They prevailed because their calling was so strong."

Wasewase ko Viti, the Fijian section of the MCNZ, also had cause to celebrate. With the ordination of Apakuki Ratuoka, it receives a New Zealand-trained presbyter into its ranks. Apakuki will be stationed in Hamilton and joins Rev Dr Ilaitia Tuwere (Auckland) and Rev Peni Tikoinaka (Christchurch) on the ministry

team leading the growing number of Fijians in the Church.

One set of celebrations had a bittersweet flavour. The Church and its Tongan synod, Vahefonua Tonga, marked the end of several decades of 'seconded' ministry that saw ministers from the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga appointed to lead the large Auckland-Manukau Parish.

Ex president Rev Jill van de Geer thanked the Free Wesleyan Church for its support of Tongan ministry in NZ when it was in its infancy and said that it is now in adulthood and can train its own leaders. Present for the celebration were the first and last seconded Tongan ministers, Rev Taniela Moala and Rev Taufa Filiai, and the current president of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Rev Dr 'Ahio.

Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune becomes the first NZ-trained superintendent of the Auckland-Manukau Tongan Parish.

Church leader hopes Tonga's transition to democracy smooth

The new president of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga has entered office at eventful period.

He has dealt with two national tragedies since being elected and will now see his country enter a stage of political change as the powerful monarchy is set to give up some of its authority to a democratic government.

Rev Dr 'Ahio was elected president of the Free Wesleyans in June and the following month had to deal with the aftermath of the Princess Ashika ferry disaster. Then in September, Tonga's remote northern islands were devastated by the tsunami that followed the Samoa earthquake.

"After the Princess Ashika sank, there were a lot of accusations against the government, and I had to respond to the situation in the media," 'Ahio says. "In Tonga the people look to church leaders more than government leaders for help and advice."

"People raise questions at times of tragedy that are very hard to answer: Where is God



Rev Dr 'Ahio

in such situations? Why does God allow such things to happen? We took a pastoral approach and spent time with families who had lost loved ones."

Now Tonga faces the prospect of moving toward a more democratic political system after King George Tupou V agreed last month to the Constitutional and Electoral Commission recommendations to move toward a more democratic government. Under the proposals, 17 of the 26 Members of Parliament would be elected by the people. The remaining nine would be representatives of the nobles.

'Ahio says the electoral system that emerges in Tonga must be one that is suited to the culture and traditions of the society.

"Tongans value communal life. In our tradition everyone participates to maintain the well-being of the village or the clan. We need a political system that will allow people to participate in running the country."

"From a Biblical point of view we are stewards and we have a responsibility to look

after our culture. But at the same time we have a small population and we live in a complex, fast-changing world. Pacific Island countries have to work together to face the challenges of globalisation.

"Tonga is a hierarchical society, and democracy and hierarchy don't necessarily sit well together. These are the values we are brought up with as part of our culture, and they will only change gradually."

"Also we have seen some of the problems democracy has brought in the Solomon Islands and Fiji. We need a form of democracy that fits in with our own society, culture and traditions."

'Ahio says under the current proposals the King will have more power than the Queen of England. He will, for example, have the authority to endorse the prime minister and to adjourn Parliament. He would also sign laws passed by the House.

The final shape of the new political system should take place by the end of this year.

When elections do take place, the church will not be involved in the electoral process nor support political parties, 'Ahio says.

"We pray that the transition to democracy will be smooth."



Rex Nathan serves communion with the help of Bella Ngaha.

Taha Maori banking on new minister

This year's Methodist Conference was a major one for the Church's Te Taha Maori members. Along with the induction of lay person Lana Lazarus for her year of service as vice president, Rex Nathan became the first member of Te Taha Maori to be ordained to presbyteral ministry for more than 30 years.

Rex has been a minita-a-iwi (lay minister) in the Church for 15 years and he also assists kaumatua at his home marae, Otirei, near Dargaville.

He says he will retire from his job as an ANZ Bank Manager in January.

"My training as a minita-a-iwi was within Te Taha Maori, under the guidance of Te Tai Tokerau Rohe, Hui Poari, Tumuaki Rev Diana Tana and the late aunties Mere Cassidy, Timaru Rogers, Ani Tana and Lorraine Toia. I was also strongly influenced by Reverends Eru Te Tuhi, Sam Toia, Rua Rakena, Hana Hauraki and Buddy Te Whare and the deaconesses in the earlier days."

"As support for my kaumatua, I work within the marae environment with our hapu and iwi. There is some overlap with the work of minita-a-iwi and marae. I am still relatively young, and I only speak on the marae in the absence of my dad, Hugh Nathan, and my uncle Manuera Tohu," Rex says.

Hugh and Manuera were on hand for the induction and ordination services at Methodist Conference and spoke on behalf of the manuhiri (guests) during the powhiri.

Rex says he will continue to serve on boards and committees such as Council of Conference, Prince Albert College Trust and Grey Institute Trust.

"I will continue to work with Diana and be active in the Rohe and Hui Poari."

Rex says he thoroughly enjoyed his 46 years with ANZ Bank because it meant working in the community and supporting people in their endeavours. It was hard to give it up and retire.

"However, I have the support of my family especially my wife Ihapera and Rohe members as I go into ordained ministry. Mum and Dad used to make us go to Sunday school so they are responsible for my beginnings with the Methodist Church," Rex says.

"The week before Conference the Dargaville Methodist Parish invited us to their service and we enjoyed their blessings and prayers. Sister June was there. She was a deaconess and told a story about two boys who first attended Sunday school in 1949. That was my brother and I, and I would have been four years old at the time."

A service to celebrate Rex's induction will be held at Otirei Marae on February 14th.



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Proposals to change Methodist leadership, decision-making knocked back

By Paul Titus

Faced with proposals to revamp the way it holds Conference and selects its president, Methodist Conference opted for the status quo.

Among the other major decisions Conference made were to set up a Public Questions Network and to continue exploring ways to restructure the Methodist Church along lines suggested by the Governance Task Group.

After a thorough debate Conference found there was no consensus to accept a recommendation to move from an annual to a biennial conference.

In the end there was insufficient time to fully debate a second proposal, to move from a president and vice president who hold office for a one-year term to a sole president, who would hold office for two years. In the limited amount of time Conference discussed this proposal, it was clear that some people were dissatisfied with it and it was referred back to Council of Conference for further work.

President Rev Alan Upson was impressed that the debates around the two topics were respectful and polite. "There was none of the bitterness that has characterised some past Conferences and I hope this means we are maturing as a Church."

In the debate some of those who supported a shift to a biennial Conference emphasised the financial cost of holding Conference every year. Others emphasised the environmental cost associated with such a large gathering.

Those who spoke in favour of an annual Conference pointed out

the value of meeting face-to-face for a diverse church. Others expressed concerns that the decision-making authority of Conference would be eroded if it took place every two years.

General secretary Rev David Bush supported the move to a biennial conference. He believes the cost of holding an annual Conference is difficult for a Church the size of the MCNZ to bear.

"People who gather at Conference to debate are not necessarily the ones who pay the costs in the parishes. Nevertheless, by opting to meet annually, the Church has affirmed the value of Conference."

David says the proposal to move to a single full-time president rather than a presidential team, would also deliver financial savings. He estimates these would amount to about \$40,000 a year.

Some of those who spoke against this leadership model focused on the value of lay and ordained partnership that a presidential team provides.

The Council of Conference prepared the proposals regarding Conference and the presidency, and Rev Desmond Cooper was one of the spokespeople who presented them to Conference.

Like Alan, Desmond was pleased that Conference had a thorough airing of the issues surrounding the biennial Conference and came to a peaceful consensus. He is uncertain what the Council of Conference will now do with its proposal about the make up of the presidential team, however.

"Conference did not provide the Council of Conference a guide on

where it wants to go with the presidency. We put forward a proposal for leadership for a church with declining membership and we have been knocked back.

"I am not sure what the mind of Conference is on the presidency, and to what extent it wants a presidium or a vice president. It is likely that we will present the proposals to synods again next year, see what mandate we get from them, and present that to the next Conference," Desmond says.

Conference did move forward in its efforts to set up a Public Questions Network. A five-person coordinating group (made up of two people appointed by Taha Maori, two by Tauwiwi, and one by Methodist Missions Aotearoa) will oversee the work of the Networks coordinator.

David explains that while the coordinator will do some research and prepare some resources, he or she will not do all the work of engaging the Church in social and political issues. Rather the coordinator will encourage and coordinate initiatives coming from congregations.

"I expect the coordinator will focus on a limited number of issues each year. Methodist Missions Aotearoa will pay half the coordinator's salary and therefore some of the work that person does will be on issues that feed into their social service delivery. Others will be issues identified by people in parishes," David says.

Another important decision Conference makes is to select the president and vice president elect. The incoming team for 2011 is Desmond Cooper and Sue Spindler.



Newly ordained ministers (from left) Tony Franklin, Rex Nathan, Apakuki Ratucoka, David Poultny, and Alipate 'Uhila.



Lana Lazarus and Rev Alan Upson address conference after their induction.



Robyn Allen-Goudge's solos and Wallace Woodley's musicianship were a highlight of the induction service.



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We also thank those who have written articles, letters to the editor, and reviews. The paper is livelier and more interesting because of your contributions.



Sermons in scones

To the editor,

It's been a privilege to be welcomed into Diana Roberts' kitchen every month for the last eight years. Not only is her food always delicious, she recognizes that our need to eat every day of our lives brings with it not only great pleasure but also struggle and sorrow.

In every column, her view of the kitchen as a microcosm of the wider world is taken another step further with her unique ability to conjure up culinary parables.

Thank you Diana, for your unforgettable Kitchen Theology.

Lois Daish, Wellington

Connexion

To the editor

Well I never! Perhaps the connexion should pass the hat round and purchase a Concise Oxford Dictionary for your correspondent Ed

James. The word "connexion" is to be found there and with special reference to the Methodist Church. Thank God for the Connexion.

Mervyn Dine, Auckland

Doubts Bible mythical

To the editor,

It is not surprising to learn that the vice president of the Methodist Church is alleged to have proclaimed that the Garden of Eden is a 'Biblical myth'.

Apostle Paul told Timothy that the time would come when people would not listen to

sound doctrine. Rather they will follow their own desires and collect for themselves more and more teachers who will tell them what they want to hear.

No doubt the vice president received a standing acclamation.

Ivan Harper, Tauranga

Praise for Pacific health advocate



Rev Taufa Filiai (top row, left) with programme managers of the Pacific Quit Smoking Service, at the Service's launch in August.

To the editor

I would like to acknowledge of Rev Taufa Filiai and his contribution to the health of his congregation and the Pacific church communities in Auckland.

As superintendent of the Auckland-Manukau Tongan Methodist Parish, Taufa Filiai has done a lot for the health of his parishioners in terms of healthy eating, healthy action and the smoke-free environment. He is to be commended for his achievements and his tireless efforts in supporting good health of the Pacific people church communities.

He has supported the programmes that National Heart Foundation of NZ has run to promote healthy churches and the Pacific Quit Smoking Service, a smoking cessation service for Pacific people in work places and churches under the Auckland Regional Public Health Service.

Pacific people are over represented in lower health statistics and Taufa Filiai's work through his church ministry was phenomenal.

The prevention programmes he has supported are aimed at reducing the rate of premature deaths amongst the Pacific people from cardiovascular diseases, strokes, and cancer, the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in NZ. Cardiovascular disease and strokes account for 40 percent of the deaths in NZ.

The church is the best venue in approaching Pacific people as 90 percent of the Pacific

people are affiliated with churches. Taufa Filiai is a gatekeeper in championing for Auckland's Tongan community. This is essential as Pacific people listen more to church ministers than anybody else.

The quit smoking initiative has been successful in Taufa Filiai's church kava group. I was invited to present a data show prior to their usual kava ceremony. Through dialogue the smokers have received a good understanding of

smoking issues.

Eight members of the kava group decided to quit smoking completely after the kava ceremony. These individuals belong to the Dominion Road Methodist Church and they have testified to their congregation about the good feeling they have had after they quit smoking.

Taufa Filiai has also promoted gardening. He used to tell of his beautiful vegetable gardens in Tonga, where harvest time meant a free supply of vegetables to elderly members of his church.

One elderly lady said to him, 'Reverend, it's not a big deal if your spiritual service doesn't work because we will never forget the free vegetables you used to give us.'

Also Taufa Filiai organised a walking group who used to walk from the minister's residence at Milton Road all the way to Mt. Eden. Once they reached the top of the mountain they usually had testimonies and prayer.

I have come across Pacific church ministers who argue that what matters in the Bible are the negative attributes that come from the soul such as hatred, jealousy, selfishness, disobedience and so on. They imply that what comes into our body like food and smoking cigarettes is less priority. On the contrary, our body is the Temple of God.

Vaipulu Manuopangai,

*Pacific Smoking Cessation Facilitator,
Auckland Regional Public Health Service*



KITCHEN THEOLOGY

Eat your bread with joy...

By Diana Roberts

...And drink your wine with a merry heart'. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes (9:7) encourages us, evoking the cheerful strains of God Rest You Merry Gentlemen and visions of a Christmas dinner table heavy with food, surrounded with happy faces.

'Who's coming?' and 'What'll we have to eat?' are big questions for the provider of the Christmas feast. Giving the appropriate priority to those questions determines the joyfulness of the occasion.

If the focus is on the food, things can get out of hand, as we scan glossy recipe books and magazines, trawl the Internet for complicated and expensive meals, and run out to overspend on the delicacies listed in the seasonal junk mail.

If the focus is on the guests, then the celebration is much more likely to be filled with gladness. Remember Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol, when the large Cratchit family shouted gleefully as their father carved thin slices from the little roast goose and their mother proudly brought in the small, steaming pudding. Their cup of joy overflowed when the oldest child, Martha, a servant girl, arrived to spend the day with them.

Ecclesiastes offers a wise reflection: "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise," (9:11). No family in London was happier than the Cratchits that Christmas Day, and though the sudden generosity of mean old Scrooge showered them with luxury goodies, their chief delight was in the secure future he offered for frail Tiny Tim, and in the conversion of the grumpy miser himself.

On the third Sunday in Advent we light the candle of joy. The Christian World Service (CWS) Christmas Appeal liturgy for the day introduces us to the Centre for Community Solidarity in Uganda. The scourge of AIDS in Uganda has left thousands of orphans to be cared for by elderly or young relatives. These families have had to walk long distances to collect water each day; but the Centre has built rainwater collection tanks and the villagers rejoice in the chance to grow food and keep livestock now that water is easily accessible.

'Give Us a Chance' is the theme of this year's appeal. We have a chance to change lives with our giving.

May the spirit of Joy, which dwells within us,

Spill out into the hearts and homes of everyone we meet.

May deep joy be yours at Christmas.

Goodbye, and love from Diana.
(Editor's note: As she wrote in Kitchen Theology last month, this is Diana's last Kitchen Theology column. Diana wrote her first reflection for this space in the inaugural edition of Touchstone, in May 2001. By our count this is her 96th column.)

In this time, Diana has shared her thoughts about food, family, community and the Church. She has made us aware of the ways food connects the most mundane details of daily life with our grandest spiritual yearnings – and everything in between.

At Conference last month, the Methodist Publishing Board thanked Diana for her generous contribution to Touchstone. On behalf of the Board, I wish to repeat that message here and say 'bon appetite and go well'.)

Presidential team off to a running start

Rev Alan Upson

Greetings from Lana and I, the new presidential team.

Conference ran like a well-oiled machine. This is not surprising given a Conference train of general secretary, experienced Connexional staff, excellent Te Taha Maori reflections, a careful and energetic arrangements committee, wise directors and convenors supported by hoards of keen agenda-carrying Conference members.

And don't forget the music, the Holy Spirit, and a purposeful, loving, challenging Christ of grace. With those who have gone before, there's a huge momentum for Conference to be a heart-warming and purposeful experience.

After Conference, while Lana edited and forwarded letters of thanks to me on my laptop, I attended the Methodist-



Catholic Dialogue at St Pauls Methodist Church, London Street, Hamilton. In their conference room (with the scent of pink and white roses drifting in the door) we discussed The Sacraments and Wesley's catholic spirit. Outside, Rev Buddy Te Whare's recently installed plaque lay beneath the tawa tree.

During a visit to the new Catholic Cathedral I received a newly published book about the refurbished building. I, in turn, presented it to newly ordained Rev David Poultney, a member of the dialogue. I charged him to place it where people could browse through it and be reminded of the things Catholics and Methodists have in common.

Lana and I went in two directions the following weekend, she went to church anniversary celebrations at Kawhia, and I was off to Palmerston North. I took a short cut at Ohingaiti, and, passing a mob of sheep, I asked a farmer for directions.

Forty five minutes later, I phoned my wife Kerry to complain that I didn't think I'd get out. Two kilometres more to Kimbolton, and finally the road entered a 12 kilometre straight.

Friday morning at the Palmerston North local Access Radio station John Thornley and I pre-recorded a January Methodist message. Methodist Social Services hosted my pastoral visit to their committed teams of keen people and amazing industry. A men's dinner followed (40 men, all enjoying themselves without rugby, racing or beer!) where I shared my failed 1967 year at Massey University.

On Saturday a meeting with local parish leaders was followed by a LNIS (Lower North Island Synod) celebration service. This acknowledged Deacon Brenda Fawcner's retirement and the rare collusion of a president, ex-vice president Ron Gibson and president elect Des Cooper in a synod at the one time.

At a Manawatu Regional service at Pohangina on Sunday, four young lay

leaders, Asenaca Chapelle, Jessica Rabone, Katherine Chisholm, and Ian Passey received their Worship Leading certificates. Monday I flew to Wellington, where the Heads of Churches met with Members of Parliament. The return journey, by a shuttle mini-bus, got me into bed at 2am because fog had closed New Plymouth airport.

A warm-hearted Pukekohe Methodist anniversary, gave me another opportunity to visit my 96 year old mother, and enjoy the memories and celebrations of the circuit that includes Pukekohe, Mauku, Karaka and Clarks Beach churches, Wesley College and Camp Morley. About the time of this publication, Lana, national youth worker Te Rito Peyroux and I stop overnight in Whangarei before going on to Kaeo for the Boyd Remembrance weekend. Those with computers can Google the website at Boyd Remembrance 2009.

Advent has begun. May the love, hope, peace, joy and the grace of Christ be at the heart of your Christmas.

Rubbish Theology

By Ikilifi Pope, Onehunga
Co-operating Parish

At Methodist Conference Rev Saikolone Taufa faced some friendly teasing and earned the title 'minister of rubbish' for his role as leader of the team that dealt with our waste. I suggest it is worth reflecting on the significance of making our faith practical by taking seriously our rubbish. Dealing strategically with our waste can sustain the beauty of God's creation.

The 'rubbish team' nicely lined up rubbish bins, as is the usual procedure at big gatherings like Conference, and labeled them 'cutlery', 'food scraps', 'plastic plates' and 'paper'. The labels were in big letters so people could easily identify the different bins.

After the meals, Saikolone directed some of us to empty small rubbish bins into a big bin on a truck so the rubbish could be dumped. I noticed that some members of Conference were unable or not patient enough to sort their rubbish according to the instructions on the bins. They lumped their plastic plates and cutlery together with food scraps. I heard one person from the rubbish team gently ask a woman whether she is blind because she put her handful of plastic plates into a food scraps bin.

After observing the rubbish issue at Conference, I shared the experience at my Parish Council as a response to a complaint from our parish administrator. In our

meetings he often raises the issue of rubbish being dumped at our doorstep and car park area particularly if the hall is used at night. As the result the administrator often ends up picking up rubbish before entering his office in the morning

So, rubbish theology aims in this context to symbolize theologically the significance of practicing our faith in small ways such as dealing honestly with our own rubbish. Dealing with the small amounts of rubbish that dirty our own places can equip us to better handle effectively the large amounts of rubbish that can affect our ministry, society and world as a whole. To deal honestly with our waste we have to employ some vital tools such as respect, social justice, inclusiveness, patience, commitment, environmental care, and more.

Last but not least, caring for our environment reminds us that we are stewards of God's abundance. Good stewardship is a vital tool that can reveal our respect for God, for others and for creation. Respecting the environment and creation equates to respecting and honouring God. I think this is what the theologian Sally McFague means when she uses image of the earth as God's body.

To respect our environment is to manage wisely our abundance for the future of young generations. And to manage our rubbish patiently is a sign of a practical faith and good stewardship.

Christmas reflection Make way for the image of God

By Rev Dr Susan Thompson
There's an old Jewish saying that goes, "In front of every human being there goes a host of angels saying 'Make way for the image of God, make way for the image of God.'"

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of a special child. Jesus is the one in whom we believe we can see God. In his living, his growing, his loving and his dying, Jesus revealed the character and the passion of God. So like the angels in the Christmas story we lift our voices to give thanks and rejoice in his life.

As we do so, we might take time to remember what was at the heart of Jesus' message. And that is his belief – shown in all his actions and reflecting that ancient Jewish wisdom – that angels sing at every human birth. There is joy and gladness in all of creation whenever and wherever a child is

born. For every life is special, every life is precious and unique, every life is holy because every one of us is made in the image of God.

Sometimes it's hard to hold on to that belief for we live in a world where life is often treated cheaply. People die in their millions from preventable diseases. Nations exist in poverty for the sake of cheap coffee and consumer goods. At the local level, young men and women kill themselves or others on the road or in our cities and we lock them up so we don't have to think too hard about why they did it. It's not easy to make room in our hearts or minds for all the pain and difficulty of human life.

Sometimes it feels safer just to close our eyes or to turn away.

But imagine how the world would be if, like Jesus, we could see in every single life a person who deserves our care and value. Imagine how the world might change if we could treat every life as worthy of saving no matter what effort it took. And imagine how the world might even be heaven if we could hear the angels singing every time a child was born and know that they were also singing for us.

In front of every human being, there goes a host of angels saying, 'Make way for the image of God, make way for the image of God.' Amen.



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Visitors praise, chide NZ's ecumenical performance



Doug Chial, Tara Tautari, and Prawate Khid-arn.

By Paul Titus
Churches around the world face similar challenges adapting to rapidly changing societies dealing with immigration, climate change and social inequality. And, despite challenges, ecumenism is alive and well in the 21st century.

These were the messages a trio of representatives from bodies that link New Zealand churches to the international ecumenical movement brought to Methodist Conference.

Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) general secretary Dr Prawate Khid-arn and World Council of Churches (WCC) representatives Doug Chial and

Tara Tautari addressed Conference as part of their week-long tour of New Zealand to meet with church leaders and ecumenists.

They told Touchstone that they were particularly interested to check out the ecumenical scene here because this is the only country in the world to have established a national ecumenical council that later collapsed.

They observed that it appears ecumenism is alive and well here though its expression is more spirit-led than institution-led.

"We are happy to see churches working together at both parish and inter-church level. We are also happy that

there is a national dialogue on unity active among churches that are committed to doing things together," Doug said.

Tara said they had seen a number of examples of community-based ecumenism. While this is positive, often congregational-led ecumenical initiatives are not interested in initiatives that come from above.

National and international ecumenism is an important legacy of New Zealand churches. The Methodist Church of NZ was a founding member of both the WCC and CCA, and this is a worthy heritage.

"The question is who carries the institutional memory of these achievements and shares them with new and younger members of the Church," Tara said.

"People think of WCC as those people in Geneva and the CCA as an organisation in Thailand. In fact, we are a fellowship of member churches and it is important for us to renew contact and strengthen relations."

The CCA provides a forum for Asian churches – including those in Australia and NZ – to voice their concerns. While it is difficult for Asian churches to achieve unity, they share concerns about the environment, immigration and refugees, HIV-Aids, and relations with people of other faiths. *See Page 13*

Food banks count on goodwill as demand grows

By Marie Sherry

Food Banks around New Zealand are struggling to cope with the increased demand for help as the recession affects a growing number of New Zealanders.

Methodist City Action director Lindsay Cumberpatch chairs the Hamilton Combined Christian Food Bank. Lindsay says the food bank reported a 31 percent increase in demand this month from last year, with demand expected to rise further over Christmas.

"It's pretty significant. We're budgeting to spend \$60,000 in this current financial year buying food on top of the huge amount that is donated very generously by parishioners and members of the community. That's an indication of the demand," Lindsay says.

"Last year we spent less than \$50,000. It's indicative of the fact we can't just rely on donations of food. The money is all fund raised and donated, and we have some very good support in the community for our food bank."

Lindsay is pleased to report that food and financial donations have been maintained at a good level this year, despite the economic recession.

"People are recognising that a number of people are hurting out there. We all know, in terms of the increasing numbers of people who are unemployed, and people are continuing to respond very generously but the reality is that demand is outstripping supply."

The type of people needing help from the food bank ranges from single people through to families, with the majority being beneficiaries. Struggling to make ends meet puts additional stress onto families, Lindsay says.

"The demand over Christmas is always up. We're hosting a brown paper bag appeal at the moment. Over 1000 bags have gone out and they're starting to come back in with goods to replenish shelves at the food bank. We get an increasing demand for emergency food over Christmas, as people deal with

buying Christmas presents and hosting family. It goes right through to January and February as people cope with the effects of Christmas and paying for Christmas."

The Hamilton Combined Christian Food Bank is an ecumenical joint-venture food bank that has been operating for more than 10 years.

Lindsay says all types of non-perishable food items are needed.

"I've been really impressed with the generosity of Kiwis during this period of recession, when all of the social services agencies have faced increasing demand," he says.

"It's not just beneficiaries, but a wider range of people needing extra support, including the elderly."

Christchurch Methodist Mission team leader Paula Crean says the 13 food banks in Christchurch have also experienced a 30 percent increase in demand this year. In some the increase has been 50 percent over last year.

They had seen a larger number of low- and middle-income families requiring help, as well as people on benefits, elderly, people who had lost their jobs or had reduced work hours, seasonal workers who couldn't find contracts and newly released prisoners.

While donations from some traditional sources, such as supermarkets and businesses, had decreased this year, Paula says she is still extremely impressed by the generosity of many individuals.

"There's just less to go around. There will be a peak in demand before Christmas and then straight after when the reality of over spending over Christmas hits along with the cost of school uniforms and stationery," she says.

"We primarily do budgeting and advocacy support so we make sure people are getting their entitlement at Work and Income. We're the safety net if people have used all that up."

On a positive note, Work and Income doubled its food entitlement last August, and Paula says this has made a big difference to many people.

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William James

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What if 'church' was a verb?

That is the question the United Methodist Church in the United States wants its members to ask themselves as part of its Rethink Church campaign.

Rethink Church challenges both Methodist congregations and unchurched people to become more outward focused and engaged in the world. Rather than be a place to come and stay, it wants the church to become a base of operations for expressing faith by being active in communities and around the world as part of God's plan for world transformation.

The communication division of the United Methodist Church runs Rethink Church. The initiative is a media campaign with a difference. Because it is aimed at young people, it not only uses traditional channels of communication – television, radio, magazines and billboards – but also new media.

United Methodist Communications general secretary Rev Larry Hollon says Rethink Church is a two-pronged effort. One is to encourage Methodist congregations to rethink their mission and outreach to their local and global community. Rethink



Larry Hollon

Church provides training and marketing so churches can become outward looking and connected.

The second aspect of the initiative is to present the United Methodist Church to a broad, and particularly youthful audience. It urges people outside the church to rethink their attitudes toward church and invites them visit a Methodist congregation.

Larry says initially the United Methodist Church funded Rethink Church as a special project but its last General Conference made it an ongoing programme.

"Our only direction was to make sure we reach an audience of 18 to 34 year olds who are largely absent from church," he says. "To do this we are using social networking media, websites, and lots of video."

One of the Rethink Church websites is www.10thousanddoors.org, which was designed by and for young people. It based on the idea that there are 10,000 ways to engage with the Methodist Church and the site carries videos, music downloads, blogs, news, and links.

Larry says this and other

United Methodists rethink church



Rev Bill Shillady (centre) rallies United Methodist volunteers as they prepare to greet the public at Bryant Park, New York City. During the day, about 160 volunteers stopped passers-by and performed "random acts of kindness" as part of a launch of the "Rethink Church" campaign.

Rethink Church initiatives let young people communicate about church in conversational and non-traditional ways.

"Strict constructionists might have a heart attack if you describe some of this as 'church'. But it is connecting with young people through the means they now use."

"We resourced young people to make videos about things they would do to change the world, whether through volunteer activities or Bible studies. This kind of outreach is allowing us to make new connections."

"For example, at one forum some Methodist young people had an exchange with the staff of 'Good' magazine, which is an irreverent, iconoclastic publication for socially concerned young people. Until then the people from the magazine were not aware that there are church people who share their concerns about peace and caring for creation."

Larry says the mainline Protestant Churches largely withdrew from public media for the past 20 to 30 years, precisely the time when the media has

become pivotal in shaping culture. As a result, more conservative, Pentecostal churches have filled the void. Rethink Church is an effort to re-establish a mainline public voice.

But Rethink Church is also about action. 'Impact Community' is a part of the initiative that encourages Methodists to change in their local communities.

Some congregations are designated as Impact Communities and they receive training and input to both develop programmes in the communities and invite the community to join them in worship. For example, one Impact Church in Dallas does mission and worship across north Texas.

Some initiatives are developed and carried out by young people. Wesley Foundation is the United Methodist Church's campus ministry outreach and many branches are getting involved with Rethink Church. One of the projects that has come out of this is a major fund-raising effort to purchase mosquito bed nets for people affected by poverty and malaria.

The United Methodist Church hopes its Rethink Church initiative will spark a global conversation about what it means to live as a person of faith and a disciple of Jesus Christ in the 21st century.

For more see www.umcom.org.

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Christmas

Appeal is both “humbling and heartening.”

This year's Christmas Appeal is a first for me as National Director of Christian World Service.

It is both humbling, and heartening to take part in what has become a central event for our organisation.

Humbling when I realise that CWS has been standing up for, and beside the poor for 64 very effective years.

Heartening when I look at what we have done this year and am reminded again of how we are making a positive difference to so many lives.

This year's Christmas Appeal theme of “Give Us a Chance” is a renewal and reminder of what we ultimately stand for.

Through CWS we are giving a chance to people to experience directly the power and sense of potential that comes from active support, both with survival and with finding ways to better their lives.

It is why the leaders of the Methodists,

Anglican, Presbyterian, Quaker, Salvation Army and Uniting Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand back and encourage their parishes to support the CWS Christmas Appeal.

We are a known, proven quantity with low overheads where 84 per cent of what we raise goes to those in genuine need.

This year CWS has supported 29 overseas partner groups, responded in emergency situations, as well as funded regional programmes in Asia and the Pacific, plus peace and justice programmes through the World Council of Churches.

The World Council of Churches programmes have involved being a public witness in combat areas, promoting reconciliation, and engaging churches to protect the world's atmosphere and water rights.

I think it's important to make the point that not all our work is “doom, gloom and ginger ale.”

It can also be funny, inspiring and

genuinely transformative.

This year I visited the Philippines with other CWS workers and met some of the people, primarily women we have been working with on



social and economic empowerment.

Across the cultural divide I was reminded vividly by these women how ultimately we are all so similar.

One woman in one meeting summed up the impact of her journey to self determination and control as “now I can buy luxuries like lipstick.”

Another woman said that she had gone from subsistence living to having two public office roles, a thriving roadside stall shop, and a husband who had started to complain she was never home. “I bought him a motorbike and that shut him up,” she said.

While I have enjoyed these moments of genuine good humour I have also been mindful

of how Christian World Service's long history of standing with poor people must continue to be a reality.

Two global issues have been an important backdrop to our actions this year, and will continue to impact on the year ahead.

Economic recession and climate change both weigh heavy on the millions who already live in a fragile balance between poverty and basic survival.

If there is inspiring news to be found in climate change it comes in the story of how faith leaders are getting together to find solutions, not just across sectarian divides but across those of basic faiths as well.

In late October the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, convened a meeting at Lambeth Palace to talk with other faith leaders about how to respond to the emerging environmental crisis.

In an unprecedented response the leaders from every faith community, (including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Bahai, Jain and Zoroastrian), put out a joint statement on climate change.

In it the signatories said that they recognise “unequivocally that there is a moral imperative to tackle the causes of global warming” and that “Faith communities have a crucial role to play in pressing for changes in behaviour at every level of society and in every economic sector. We all have a responsibility to learn how to live and develop sustainably in a world of finite resources.”

Earlier in October the Archbishop gave his second Operation Noah lecture in Southwark Cathedral in which he tried to give a Christian vision of how people can meet the challenges of climate change within their faith.

“What we face today is nothing less than a choice about how genuinely human we want to be, and the role of religious faith in meeting this is first and foremost setting out a compelling picture of what humanity reconciled with both creator and creation might look like,” he said.

There was no ambiguity in his concluding remarks on climate change.



By Pauline McKay

For CWS I am beginning to think that possibly the way forward for us next year will be to advocate for our Pacific neighbours who are already feeling the impact of climate change.

If the Pacific tsunami offered any hope this year it was in the way we were all galvanised to give and help. The Advent season is a good time to focus on the wider family, on our shared future in that family and through the birth of Jesus remembering that miracles can happen.

As we turn our attention on Bethlehem of old we also need to acknowledge its present Palestinian inhabitants who live hemmed in by a huge wall on three sides built by modern Israel.

CWS is grateful for your continued support that enables us to help those in need throughout the world, to enable us to live out Christ's injunction to “love our neighbour as ourselves.”

Quoting Moses in the book of Deuteronomy he said: “I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death...choose life.”

While the inter faith and interdenominational accord taking shape is a wonderful development it still carries the burden of dealing with such a huge issue it is hard to break down into mentally manageable pieces.

It is sometimes hard to find specific things to do that help combat climate change in a way that resonates with meaning.

“Farming God's way” in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is changing for the better says a recent visitor.

Often written off as an economic basket case Zimbabwe looks to have turned a corner in the last year according to Christian World Service's, John Gould.

John went to Zimbabwe in October and for the first time left feeling optimistic about what is going on there.

“The situation in Zimbabwe seems to have improved markedly over the past year and since my last visit in September, 2008.”

“While great

uncertainty remains and there is still deep distrust within the coalition Government daily life for many people has got easier,” says John Gould.

He puts this down to improved political stability and the decision to ditch the hyper inflationary Zimbabwe currency in favour of using the American dollar.

While the benefits of this change are inconsistent it does mean that for many people some degree of economic certainty has returned.

“Now for the first time in years, people with jobs or receiving remittances from relatives abroad can actually save money, start investing in the future and not see the value of savings erode away in days.”

While the overall economy is still in dire shape with unemployment still at 80 per cent there have been other literal green shoots of recovery after good rains in the 2008/09 season.

John reports that he could see evidence of increased commercial growing again passing greenhouse complexes where tomatoes, onions, potatoes and other crops were being grown by small holding owners.

At the same time the inequity of Zimbabwe was



3. Mix with soil
4. Add fertilizer
5. Add soil
6. Use 3 maize or sorghum seeds per hole
7. Cover with soil
8. Cover the whole planted area with mulch to a depth of 3cm

The mulch ensures moisture is conserved, there are few or no weeds, and when the mulch breaks down it improves soil structure and provides organic matter which increases soil fertility.

Although the technique is very labour intensive at first it requires less labour during the second and subsequent years.

The first trial plots have been relatively small at 600sqm and have been set up beside control plots using traditional farming techniques for comparison.

John said that his field visits to see the technique firsthand had been impressive.

“We visited two families who have been practicing this system since last season and both seemed to be very impressed with the method so far, reporting an impressive first harvest.”

Both were extending the areas to use for next season and were gathering organic material to use as mulch and manure for this purpose.

There was also extensive evidence that the technique was taking off amongst other subsistence farmers.

“People have simply seen that it works and are taking it up them” says John.

There are reports that the conservation farming technique is now spreading spontaneously across many of the drier and more marginal regions of Southern Africa where rain fed cultivation is practiced.

brought home when he also passed by the huge Triple Cross Farm, a massive agricultural complex on prime land owned by Gideon Gono, the Governor of the Bank of Zimbabwe.

He passed this enormous holding on his way to see the work done by CWS funding with Conservation Farming in Zhishavane about 350 kilometres from the capital of Harare.

One of the great untold success stories of aid projects in Africa Conservation Farming has provided maize yields equivalent to between 4 and 9 tons per hectare compared with 1ton per hectare using conventional techniques.

It has been described by some organisations as “farming God's way” and by others as “Africa's best kept secret.” CWS has been involved in funding the conservation farming project in Indaba, a semi-arid and drought prone area south of Zvishavane.

The technique involved is simple but labour intensive to start with. It involves an 8 step process:

1. Dig a hole (planting station)
2. Add cow manure

Carrying baby scales into Gaza

Just before global celebrations of the fall of the Berlin Wall one Christian World Service worker found herself carrying a set of baby scales over the Israeli border into Gaza.

Taking the scales into Gaza meant that the clinic supported by CWS could again reliably weigh Palestinian babies as part of its mother and child health scheme after the Shijaia Clinic had been bombed by the Israeli military in January this year.

There had been no fatalities when the clinic was destroyed because the Israeli military had rung the building owner and told him to leave before it was bombed.

The clinic had lost everything in the bombing except a malnutrition survey which had been backed up on computer. The charred remains of equipment and the clinic signage

now cover one desk as a grim reminder in the DSPR office.

DSPR continues to work in the area at the request of local people and after a building owner offered them part of their house to use. While re-establishing the clinic, staff had painstakingly recreated their files. They literally went from house to house again getting people's medical details. At the same time they continued the anti malnutrition component of the programme.

CWS worker, Trish Murray, says that yet again she had been humbled by the continued resilience of ordinary people after the latest wave of destruction in Gaza.

“I'm always amazed at the hope and trust that many of the people still have that there is a better future for them,” she says.

The irony of helping refit what is mainly a mother and child clinic just two months before Christmas with its emphasis on maternity did occur to her and her colleague in bringing in the baby scales.

“When we called into the office in Jerusalem on the other side of the border they had four sets of scales and some other heavier equipment to go into Gaza which they could not get past the blockade.

“We volunteered to take a set of baby scales each as they were light enough to carry the half a mile or so through the border,” says Trish.

The scales were welcomed by the clinic as a valuable addition to their morning preventative health care activities.

In the afternoons the clinic runs a variety of educational and skills training sessions.

An important new addition to their skills has been trauma counselling services which are proving to be in considerable demand because of the high levels of trauma amongst the Gaza population.

The two trauma counsellors who have been trained are now also training others to do their important work.

Hands on vocational training for young men from 14 to 18, and from 18 to 21 in carpentry, welding and mechanics are also again running, or have been restarted.

Trish says that these courses are twofold in purpose, both increasing skills and also therapeutic investments in the future from a group that at times has questioned whether they do in fact have a future.

Women's programmes include classes in tailoring and sewing with some of the more skilled younger women aspiring to work as fashion designers. Some of them already have showrooms through their families and were keen to increase their design skills.

A secretarial skills course was gruelling and bilingual, in both Arabic and English. The women taking part started with a two month crash course in English.

“They learn two systems on two sets of keyboards, it's very impressive,” she says.

While there was surprising levels of hope and optimism amongst

the Gazans she met it was also very obvious that many were still quite traumatised by the latest round of what must seem like an endless war. The current state of siege where Israeli rarely allow anything into Gaza was a major obstacle for people.

They are unable to bring in essential building materials, medicines and food.

Leaving Gaza to visit family or for medical treatment was virtually impossible.

“They tell you that they can endure anything but that their families cannot come to see them and they cannot get the things they need,” she says.

In one of the world's most densely settled areas people who lost their solid multi storey homes in January's bombings cannot rebuild because no cement is allowed into Gaza. They are instead reduced to living in tents and



are talking about reverting to building using the old Biblical building materials of straw brick homes.

The continued presence of the DSPR clinic and the opportunities it provides the people in a very difficult situation are a heartening sign of commitment and support from the outside world that is much appreciated.



The best Christmas present ever!

Christian World Service brings God's hope to those we see on TV and the others who have gone un-noticed by the world's eye. With the official endorsement of the Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, the CWS Christmas Appeal is supported by churches countrywide. Many make CWS their first choice in reaching out in the name of Christ. A good number also support CWS throughout the year by automatic payment.

As you prepare gifts for family and friends, make the Appeal envelope another gift – for the someone for whom this Christmas will represent a new start in life. May the peace of Christ, the joy of the Spirit and the love at the heart of God be with you this Christmas.

The Rev Alan Upson
President, Methodist Church
of New Zealand

How you can help

- Donate online at www.cws.org.nz, at church or by phone on 0800 74 73 72
- Hold a special service, collection or fundraising event
- Send a cheque to CWS Christmas Appeal PO Box 22652, Christchurch
- Return your appeal envelope
- Promote the appeal in your parish and community
- Pray for the people of Zimbabwe, Gaza, The Philippines and other communities in need of hope
- Add a link to your website – buttons can be downloaded from www.cws.org.nz

Prepare the ground for the kingdom of Jesus

As we enter the Advent season, we look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ but we seldom give much thought to the birth of his cousin, John the Baptist.

We know from the Gospel accounts that when Mary had been told by Gabriel that she was to bear Jesus, she was also told that her cousin Elizabeth was pregnant, and she went to visit her.

Elizabeth was beyond the usual age for childbearing but the birth of her child had been foretold by Gabriel to her husband Zachariah, who was a priest. He was told that his son would "prepare for the Lord a people fit to receive him," (Luke 1:17).

Indeed, when John grew up, he lived in the wilderness and preached all over the country round Jordan, calling people to repent of their sins and be baptized. When asked how they should do God's will, he told them to share clothing and food with the poor, and to act justly.

Many people wondered whether John was the promised Messiah but he assured them that he was simply preparing the way for the Messiah, who was soon to come.

John had a group of disciples, who went about with him and shared his

teaching and lived a very ascetic life. They continued to go around preaching and baptising even after John himself was put to death by Herod Antipas.

This happened because John had reproached Herod for marrying his brother's wife Herodias, and as a result John had been put in prison. We read somewhat more detail about this in the 'History of the Church' by Eusebius, who was a bishop and wrote a clear and lucid history of the Church in its first 300 years.

In speaking of John the Baptist, Eusebius quotes from Josephus, a Jewish priest and scholar who lived through New Testament times. The written works of Josephus include the 'Antiquities' and the 'Jewish War'. From him we learn that Herod not only married Herodias but divorced his wife in order to do so, and that Herodias also divorced her husband. His wife's father, Aretas, king of Petraea, went to war with Herod as a result.

In 'Antiquities', Josephus wrote that John was "a good man who urged the Jews to train themselves in virtue, to be just to each other and pious toward God, and to come together for baptism. Herod was afraid that John's

extraordinary hold over the people would lead to some revolt, as they seemed prepared to do anything at his suggestion."

So Herod put John in prison, and Herodias, who hated him, finally got her own way and had him beheaded, with the help of her daughter Salome (Mark 6). But clearly John, from what Josephus says, had a large number of followers, and this is borne out in Acts 18:24-28, where we learn of an important Jewish man, Apollos, who came to Ephesus when the early church was building there.

Apollos was from Alexandria, where there was indeed an important group of Greek-speaking Jews. He "had had instruction in the way of the Lord, and with a spirit full of zeal, he spoke and taught accurately the baptism of John".

After preaching in the synagogue, he made friends with the Christian group and became a full member of the Church. He passed on to Achaia, where he "powerfully confronted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus".

Clearly John was a person of great importance in the founding of Christianity. Why then did he, while in

prison, send two of his disciples to ask Jesus "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Luke 7:19). This is all the more surprising because earlier John had recognised Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:35). Presumably John had been expecting that if Jesus was the Messiah, he would by that time have been marching with an army of angels to overthrow Roman rule!

We should note what Jesus replies: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them," (Luke 7:20-22).

This is how Christ's kingdom is still spreading. After his resurrection, he sent out his disciples to carry on that some work and we can still carry it on today. With our support, there are groups of people throughout the world in impoverished countries who are receiving their sight and their health and hearing the good news of the Gospel.

Lets us take the opportunities offered to us to carry on this work in Jesus' name, for it is in this way that his kingdom is to come.

The ways of Providence

CONNECTIONS

By Jim Stuart



Last month I was asked to address Conference at its annual meeting on the theme: 'Where do we find the presence of God?' As I reflected on the

theme it seemed to me that the deeper question embedded in the theme was: how does the presence of God find us?

If we look at John Wesley's life, it is clear that while he thought he was seeking the presence of God, God was really seeking him. From the moment he was rescued at Epworth until his last breath on March 2, 1791 God was clearly guiding his life. In spite of all his perceived failures and bad choices, he discovered that there

was a gracious presence at work.

He called this gracious presence 'Providence' and as late as 1786 he acknowledged in a letter to Methodist lay preachers that 'I go calmly and quietly on my way, doing what I conceive to be the will of God. I desire barely to follow Providence as it gradually opens.'

'Providence' is a word hardly used by Christians today, and as a consequence, hardly understood. And yet, what Christian when asked will not acknowledge the many mysterious ways by which their faith has guided and directed their lives? It seems to me that Providence has gone out of fashion especially at a time when the people called Methodists in particular need to rediscover it.

One could argue that Methodism itself was and continues to be a work of Providence. Who would have anticipated the consequence of that April morning in

1739 when Wesley, against his better judgement, preached his first open air sermon in Bristol. Even Wesley doubted the wisdom and efficacy of field preaching and confessed in his journal that "I could scarcely reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields."

To which he added the remarkable observation, "All my life till very lately I have been so tenacious of every point relating to decency and good order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church". To his complete surprise during that first month of field preaching it is estimated that Wesley preached to approximately 47,500 persons, averaging about 3,000 on every occasion.

Wesley's misgivings had become Providence's opportunities. I often wonder if there ever would have been the Methodist movement if Wesley had

decided not to go to Bristol!

After sitting through some of the sessions of Conference during this past week and listening to the debates over everything from the frequency of Conference to whether to support recommendations on Climate Change, I began to suspect that we are really trying to constrain God to the church's agenda in fear of being expanded by God's agendas.

The continuing paradox of Wesley was that the more he encouraged the Methodists to be open to the ways of Providence, the more the Methodists sought to become respectable and successful. As Wesley once observed late in his life, "the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal. Consequently they increase in goods... Although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away".

Refuel the spiritual tank this Christmas

By Peter MacKenzie, UCANZ executive officer

Have you noticed recently that there are a lot fewer petrol stations throughout the country? I've been doing a fair bit of travelling lately and I am constantly seeing tanks being removed or buildings remodelled for another business.

It's not just in the country areas either. Even in the cities there is a decrease in the number of petrol stations. I'm sure that there is an economic reason for this change – even when I used to pump petrol back in the 1980s it was difficult to make any money selling petrol (the profit was made in the supplementary sales).

As a consequence of having fewer stations I have found the petrol light going on in my car once or twice. On one trip I was heading to a familiar petrol station with a

depleted tank only to find it closed and like Burns' mouse,* I found that my best laid plans had gone astray. It reminded me again that it is a good habit to keep the car with a reasonably full tank.

I've also seen churches closing. Around the country there are a number of very sympathetic recreations of churches into cafes, galleries or houses and there are some awful ones. I also realise that co-operating ventures are often connected with some of the sold property – it was part of the rationale of coming together at a local level. The closing of a church, like the loss of a petrol station, has an impact on the community.

I sense that our community is running a lot nearer to empty than we were – and here I am talking about our spiritual tanks. Society

seems to be living more on the edge and the increasing violence and disruption are a symptom of that. There are also fewer opportunities for spiritual renewal and personal reflection.

We, as a society, are moving faster and losing the opportunities to restore our spiritual energy. Depression, disillusionment, drugs, alcohol – they are all outcomes of the pace of life and the draining of the spirit.

Our churches, even though fewer in number, are still the distributors of spiritual insight. Our Gospel task continues to be one of taking the Good News into the busyness of society. To provide a place where people can top up their spiritual resources and prepare for the journey.

At Christmas time there is an

even greater need for a place for a spiritual refuelling. The financial pressure, social norms and family expectations often drain the energy from a season of the year that should be uplifting. Into that comes the Christmas message of hope – a shared nativity scene, a carol sung in the street, an unexpected gift. The petrol is still pumping!

May God's richest blessing be with you all as you encounter the Christ of Christmas. Take time over the summer to refuel the tanks, share a smile with a stranger, and re-energise for the work of God's kingdom next year.

*From 'To a Mouse' by Robbie Burns, where the field mouse's home was destroyed by the farmer. The authentic line reads "the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley."

Partnership to turn Mt Eden church into community centre



Bill Peddie chats with Auckland Mayor John Banks after the signing ceremony at Mt Eden Methodist Church.

By Cory Miller
On the corner of Mt Eden Village sits a small church, its fading paint and aged wood a sign of its long history. Today it has become a bridge of partnership between the Auckland Central Methodist Parish, the Mt Eden community, and the Auckland City Council.

On Sunday November 1st this unique partnership was formalised with the signing of an agreement to redevelop the church.

The agreement was borne out of a project that is about more than just the physical foundations of a church. Mt Eden Methodist lay minister Dr Bill Peddie believes the value of the project lies beyond its material nature.

"It is not just a vision for a building that has caught our attention but a vision for a partnership," Bill says. "What makes this truly exciting is that community, city council and church for the first time are working together with enthusiasm for a common goal. The building is the centre piece for this project but the real value comes from the church and community working together."

The initiative to redevelop Mt Eden church began when the congregation decided that its buildings were in such a sorry state

that it would build a new church on the site of the old one. However, when the Mt Eden community heard of the plans they stepped in,

Local people were reluctant to let the church demolish what they felt was an important part of the history and character of the Mt Eden village. Appeals were made to the council who agreed to support plans to create a restored church that maintained its historic features.

The new buildings will include a modernised section that connects the church itself with the hall. These new buildings will also create a facility that is available for use as a community resource.

The financial cost of the project was huge. Though the council and community donated a good proportion of these costs, a great deal of additional fundraising was required to reach the estimated cost of 1.4 million dollars. Determination prevailed and after the signing of the agreement last month, Mayor John Banks painted the final notch on the fundraising thermometer.

With the money raised the church and community expect to begin renovations in March of 2010. The redevelopment should be completed by the following September.

Rev Jill van de Geer is past

president of the Methodist Church and a former parishioner of the Auckland Central Parish, which includes Mt Eden. She recalls when the steps were first taken to start the project, and she attributes its success today to the way the church looked outside the realm of its usual practices.

"As a church we cannot just sit in our ivory tower and hope that the community will just come to us. They won't just walk through our open doors. We must network, take steps forward, and reach out."

Mayor John Banks also has faith in the strength of the partnership between the church and the community. He recognises the wisdom of shaping the Mt Eden church into a resource for the community.

"A relationship has developed between church and community. Ideals are the same whether it is church or lay as both have gathered today united under one roof. The architect of the Universe would be proud of the work being done here today," he says.

Jill observes that once the church is rebuilt, the real work can begin. "As the church and community open their hearts together they can then live their vision in a real practical sense. The project will be achieved when the community and church feel an affinity with each other."

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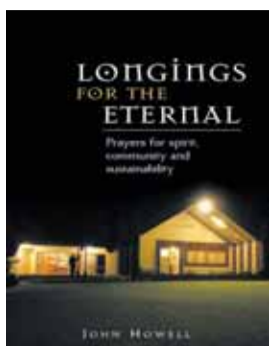
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Rev ALLAN SMITH, 15A Stewart Cres, Palmerston North 4410
Ph: 06 355 0467 by 28 February 2010

Longings for the Eternal - Prayers for spirit, community and sustainability

By John Howell
2009, St Paul's Union Parish, 32 pages
Reviewer: Diana Roberts

It's hard to believe that there are only 32 pages in this book, because it contains so much. I don't mean that it's crammed with small print – rather it's filled with fine photographs of spirit-lifting landscapes and intimate perspectives that are part of the 20 or so prayers



"Prayer is not Lotto," warns the author, rather it expresses the depth of our spirituality, "the nature of our inner person." The prayers in this collection take us outward from this centre.

They offer a source for "the ethical shift needed to move our goals from economic growth and exploitation to sustainable growth." This isn't a heavy academic exercise, but a development of prayer and action towards

a life that lasts through every level of our living.

There are several intensely personal prayers in this collection, notably the 'Prayers for the Black Dog', a week of three-line, day-by-day prayers for those struggling with depression, drawing out the spirit to connect with God in the elements of the natural world, bringing sustainable healing.

Among the prayers for growing community is a reflection on a rugby scrum as a relationship of humility. In other prayers we are engaged with ideas: ethics, justice, poverty, and mercy, and the author provides political and economic commentary to interact with the praying.

Death, a wedding, Christian festivals and symbols are among other themes explored.

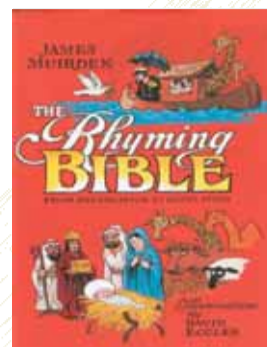
John Howell's first book, Sighs Too Deep for Words – prayers and images from Taupo, has been warmly welcomed. This second collection will enrich private meditation and public worship. Its appearance at this stage of the year is timely – it's a great (and affordable) Christmas present!

(Purchase a copy by sending \$15 to St Pauls Union Parish, Box 823, Taupo 3351.)

The Rhyming Bible – From the Creation to Revelation

By James Muirden
2007, Michael O'Mara Books, 224 pages.
Reviewer: Alan K Webster

What I find when I come to review this little book
Is wonder at the effort that the rhymester took,
The angles that he bends the English language to,
And how the scanning stretches where syllables are few.



He is wonderful with Noah and with David's rule.
His theology takes reference from the Mythic School:
His flippancy's a riot to Post-Modern taste.
The quirkiness and zaniness on children just a waste.

I wonder why he's done it in this cynic's way.
He misses points in parables I'd have to say!
Succinct and clever little twists you'll find
Of value more to people with a story mind.

So buy this little tome if you like a laugh
But don't expect much insight for a thoughtful path.
And don't expect to find a poem for your heart
This is a jingle jangle jungle for a joker's part!

(Review copy courtesy Epworth Books).

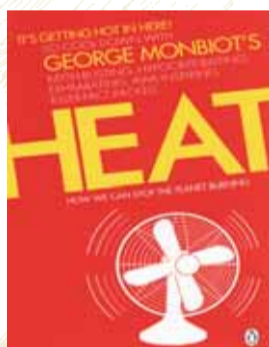
Heat - How We Can Stop the Planet Burning

By George Monbiot
2007, Penguin, 304 pages
Reviewer: Greg Hughes

With the vitally important international Climate Change conference in Copenhagen happening this month, this is a very timely book to read. Initially published in 2006 it provides a comprehensive validation that climate change is a serious issue which must be addressed now if we are to avoid catastrophic consequences later on this century.

Monbiot is convinced that climate change must be the project we put before all others. If we fail in this task, we fail in everything else. If we do not greatly reduce our carbon emissions in the next few years, average earth temperatures are likely to reach a level 2° higher than pre-industrial levels by 2030. A 2° increase is a critical threshold beyond which it will be considerably more difficult to exert any control over ever increasing temperature rises.

Monbiot presents an in depth exposure of 'The denial industry'. There are many who say that there is no need to take any action. Many of those who are in denial have vested interests in the oil and other industries which would suffer severe economic setbacks should nations take radical action to reduce global warming.



The book provides a way forward with practical suggestions as to how we can all work together to reduce our carbon footprints. The greater the cuts we make, the lesser the eventual impact on our atmosphere will be. Alternative options for power generation, transport, heating, and business management are discussed.

Every aspect of human life is critiqued from the perspective of our need to live more sustainably

in order to avoid chaos and widespread suffering and death in years to come. Extensive technical data is provided to back up all claims.

The aviation industry comes in for a particularly intense critique in terms of its dramatic contribution towards increasing

atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. If the aviation industry continues to grow at current rates, aviation will account for 50 percent of the world's carbon emissions by 2050. Travelling by air to visit those whom we love is contributing to the devastation of our ecosystem and, ultimately will result in the starvation of millions of people – mainly those who cannot afford to fly.

The tragic long-term consequences of ocean acidification are also highlighted.

This book is a thoroughly researched rational, credible and objective resource. It is written in a spirit of optimism. The subtitle of the book is 'How to stop the planet burning'. There is still time to change our ways.

Fifty pages of quality references are provided for those who want to check on Monbiot's extensive range of sources. This book is not written from a religious perspective, but all people of faith should read it. It should be in your local library. As is written on the back cover, "Inspiring, original, blazing with energy, this book should change the world." I agree.

(Review courtesy Epworth Books).

Redesigning Worship - Creating Powerful God Experiences

Kim Miller
2009, Abingdon, 183 pages
Reviewer: Alan K Webster

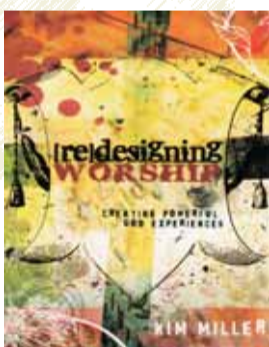
This is a first person account of the process by which one North American Methodist mega-church goes about producing worship services. Most Kiwi eyes will begin to glaze over as soon as descriptions of full-time video producers, word-weavers and production supervisors appear on the page.

At first glance, it's irrelevant to the huge majority of churches anywhere: for there are, as statisticians will tell you, far more churches with congregations of between 40 and 120 than there are 4,000+ examples. So I suspect that most Kiwi readers would pick up this book for two reasons: to see how someone else does it, and to raid their closet for pinch-able ideas that could be modified on a smaller scale...and as a resource book, this is a fair example.

That would, however, bypass something really interesting which the author does almost in passing...and that is to pose a question that I believe is central to the ethos of the Methodist Church of NZ. What is our place in contemporary culture?

Miller places the church in which she serves (the Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Ohio, where she is neither senior pastor nor even a preacher...merely a worship leader) firmly in a contemporary, multi-generational and multicultural context. She recognises that the people who come use iPods, tune in to Coldplay, watch soaps on TV and wear denim.

She sets out to create a place in which God can be experienced by this contemporary culture. This is done carefully – some might



even say calculatedly – with music, video clips, and drama. The message is fine-tuned and rehearsed for maximum intentional impact, with the understanding that when it is done well something happens that will bring people closer to God.

A minor quarrel I have with this thesis is that sometimes the unrehearsed, the unplanned, the simple and the unprofessional touches and makes that special

moment of the numinous close. There are times when a single lit candle and a CD playing will be far more effective than a panoply of AV gear and technicalia. But her principle is important and one that we need to confront head on. I still wince remembering a conversation with one of our older churches and a group of earnest saints telling me they now use modern music for the young people: Scripture in Song choruses from the 1960s played on their organ!

Miller provides several thought-provoking ideas that I am still chewing over, and that are very relevant in any attempts to design contemporary worship services. One is their production timetable. They begin on a Wednesday morning for the following Sunday. Thursday through Saturday are full on, videoing, writing songs,

practising dramas, fine-tuning readings, exploring special effects and even designing logos for advertising. All this is presented on Sunday. They rest Monday, evaluate what has happened on the Tuesday then begin all over again on the Wednesday for a new run.

This is an incredibly short turn-around time! It keeps energy high, ideas fresh, and the flow moving. It sounds exciting! She also affirms passion ahead of gifting, a theme dear to my heart. It's all too easy to depend upon experts when assembling a creative experience and to sideline the people with energy and dreams. Much better to work where the passion is, IMHO.

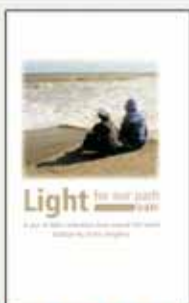
The book concludes with a few – all too few – scripts and outlines for worship, some of which would transfer with minimal enculturation to a Kiwi setting. The book would not be worth purchasing for that, however.

Far better, I think, to network with people already doing this kind of thing and cross-fertilise in ways that help you find your own congregation's creative DNA. The main value of this book will be to give people a glimpse of a different way of doing church that is not the coldly formal theatrical solo performances from 1950s Concert AM. It points to something that's relevant, speaks in the language of the people of today, and as such is well worth every presbyter and worship leader reading. Three out of five stars from me.

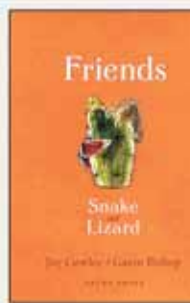
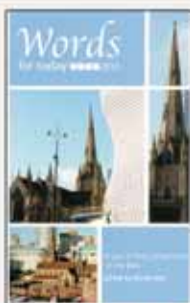
(Review copy courtesy Epworth Books.)



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ON SCREEN

A film review by Rev Dr Steve Taylor

AN EDUCATION



'An Education' is a movie about a moment. It captures a life coming of age, a decade poised on the threshold of sex, drugs and rock and roll and the intellectual struggle between the school classroom and the university of life.

The result is a movie so satisfying it is easy to lose sight of what is essentially a sordid tale, that of a 16 year old being seduced by an older man.

Jenny (Carey Mulligan) is pretty and bright. Her high school education immerses her in English literature and opens her imagination to a wider world.

Enter a handsome stranger, David

(Peter Sarsgaard), with whom she accepts a lift one wet and windy rainy afternoon. He offers her a ride out of her suburb and into a city filled with music, art and sophistication.

But a ride is rarely free and in hindsight no character gets off lightly. Jenny is left wounded by her romantic arrogance, David is found floundering in his web of lies, Jenny's parents are rendered shallow by their middle-class aspirations in post-World War 2 Britain.

An Education is based on true life, an adaptation of the 2003 autobiographical memoir of British journalist Lynn Barber.

But a film is not a book. Words on a page need to be crafted onto a screen, internal dialogue captured in sound and image.

Take for instance the scene in which Jenny stands in her bedroom, considering the

choices that lie in front of her. Written words could describe her inner thoughts. Instead, camera angles are artfully employed to present us with two Jennys, one in person, the other in the mirror. Who is the real Jenny? Who will she become as her choices are made? Hence plot and character development have been visualised.

An Education is thus a triumph for the directing skills of Dane Lone Scherfig and the screenwriting skills of Nick Hornby. Hornby is best known for his best-selling novels. It says something of his artistic abilities that he is able to not only write

stories of boys in High Fidelity, Feverpitch and About a Boy but also script the images and dialogue that portray so authentically the complexity of a teenage girl.

He is helped in no small degree by the acting skills of Carey Mulligan as Jenny. She is superb, seamlessly sashaying between giggling, giddy teenager and sophisticated socialite. Mulligan is well supported by a hard working cast, including Alfred Molina as Jenny's father and Academy Award winner, Emma Thompson as the unforgiving headmistress. David's partners in deceit, Dominic Cooper as Danny and Rosamund Pike as Helen, act as a fitting foil.

An Education is an absorbing movie. While the ending is hopefully Hollywood, it demanded a darker conclusion. "I was damaged by my education," summarised Lynn Barber in her real-life memoir. Such is life in the school of hard knocks, as adult lies and parental neglect fail teenage romanticism.

Steve Taylor is senior pastor at Opawa Baptist Church and lecturer in Gospel and Film at Bible College of New Zealand. He writes regularly at www.emergentkiwi.org.nz

CHRISTMAS according to LUKE

The liturgical year that just ended (known in the Lectionary as Year B) has concentrated on the Gospel of Mark. Mark, the earliest and shortest Gospel, does not contain any birth narratives.

Advent proclaims the beginning of a new liturgical year. We have now entered Year C that concentrates on the Gospel of Luke. All the lectionary Advent readings come from Luke.

You will probably hear them read in a modern translation. But, how well do you know the traditional words? Each set of dashes below represents a word from chapter two of Luke as written in the King James or Authorized Version. Set one comes from Verse 1, set two from verse 2, and so on. One letter and three clue words support each missing word.

Bible Challenge

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|---|-------|
| 1. went out a _ _ _ | — — — | C | — — — |
| 2. and _ _ _ taxing was | — — — | H | — — — |
| 3. _ _ _ one to his | — — — | R | — — — |
| 4. the _ _ _ of Nazareth | — — — | I | — — — |
| 5. Mary his _ _ _ wife | — — — | S | — — — |
| 6. while they were _ _ | — — — | T | — — — |
| 7. laid _ _ _ in a | — — — | M | — — — |
| 8. keeping _ _ _ over their | — — — | A | — — — |
| 9. they were _ _ _ afraid | — — — | S | — — — |
| 10. said unto them _ _ | — — — | A | — — — |
| 11. is _ _ _ the Lord | — — — | C | — — — |
| 12. wrapped in swaddling _ _ | — — — | C | — — — |
| 13. the heavenly _ _ _ praising | — — — | R | — — — |
| 14. and peace on _ _ | — — — | D | — — — |
| 15. _ _ _ to one another | — — — | I | — — — |
| 16. babe _ _ _ in a | — — — | N | — — — |
| 17. they made _ _ _ abroad | — — — | G | — — — |
| 18. wondered at these _ _ | — — — | T | — — — |
| 19. them in her _ _ _ | — — — | O | — — — |
| 20. praising _ _ _ for all | — — — | L | — — — |
| 21. his name was _ _ _ | — — — | U | — — — |
| 22. brought him to _ _ _ | — — — | K | — — — |
| 23. (v. 28) _ _ _ he him up | — — — | E | — — — |
| 24. a pair of _ _ _ | — — — | | — — — |

Answers: decree, this, every, city, espoused, there, him, watch, sore, fear, Christ, clothes, host, earth, said, lying, known, things, heart, God, called, Jerusalem, took, turtledoves. © RMS

NZ's ecumenical performance

From Page 6

"We have helped create networks between Christians and people of other faiths – Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. In some countries churches are on inter-religious councils. In Sri Lanka and Thailand we are active in peace-making," Prawate says.

The WCC representatives observed that the ecumenical movement here and around the world is evolving in much the same way the Methodist Church of NZ's bi-cultural journey is evolving. It has matured but it is an on-going, changing relationship.

"When the ecumenical movement began the churches didn't really know each other. Later they got to know each other but remained in competition. Today it seems people hold more open attitudes toward those of different denominations.

"Now the challenge is to keep the spirit of unity alive. Churches are less prophetic than they were three decades ago. Governments and NGOs do a lot of the things churches used to do but faith based-approaches can bring a different element to their efforts," Doug says.

He and Tara observed that there is little training for ecumenism in NZ theological colleges. "It is easy to turn someone into a Methodist or a Presbyterian but harder to turn them into an ecumenist."

The visit to Methodist Conference was also a homecoming for Tara. She is a former member of the Te Hahi Weteriana's Te Taha Maori. She joined WCC in 2001 and serves as planning manager for education and ecumenical formation.



Young People

Young people say I Love the Islands



'I Love the Islands' concerts brought musicians and local performers together and raised thousands of dollars for tsunami victims.

Despite the recent tragic tsunami in Samoa, some good did come of it. It was a time when Samoan communities around New Zealand rallied together.

Many mourned the loss of their loved ones, and everyone regrouped and joined forces in supporting those who survived. Whether you knew someone who had lost their life or not, it didn't matter, the loss of people was a tragedy in itself.

I can only speak of what took place in my home town of New Plymouth, though I know there have been countless efforts from young people around the country to help raise aid for tsunami relief.

One of the bigger events that was showcased in some cities was the 'I Love

the Islands' music concert series. It was a collaboration of a number of New Zealand Samoan and Pacific music artists who joined together to help raise funds. They included the Methodist Church's very own Adeaze - Naina and Vii Tupai - who attend the Mangere Central Methodist Church.

New Plymouth was the only city outside of New Zealand's major centres to host the event due to some persistent Taranaki locals who pushed the event organisers hard! The New Plymouth 'I Love the Islands' concert was enjoyed by many and raised nearly \$35,000 for the cause.

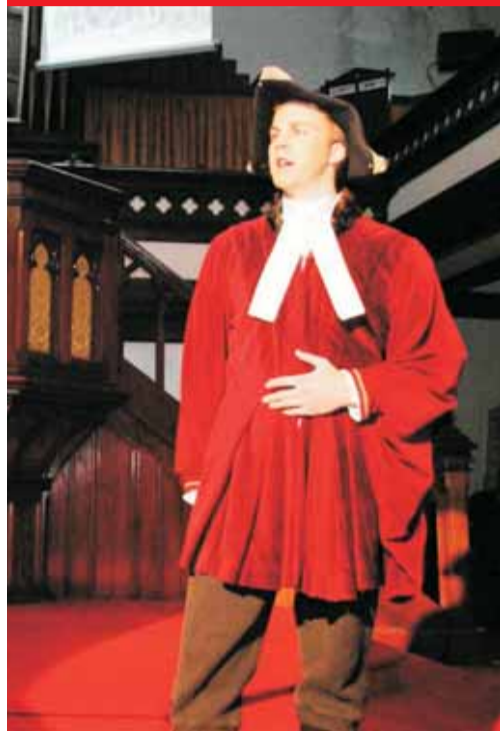
However for me on a personal level, the highlight was seeing the Samoan youth

of Taranaki - predominantly from Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic and AOG churches - come together as one to perform a few cultural dances as part of the concert entertainment. We are a small rural province and rarely come together as a united Samoan community so this tragic tsunami has actually gone a long way to uniting our small Samoan community.

On a more personal note a dear friend passed away during this sad time - a huge loss to those who knew him and the Mangere Central Methodist Church (Sinoti Samoa). Rest in Peace Peter Letiu - gone but not forgotten. Peter died while on duty as a fireman helping rescue many during the tsunami.

Wesleys in song

At Conference 2009 Young people from Christchurch's Beckenham Methodist Church performed an original musical on the life of John and Charles Wesley. The play was written by Rev Alan Webster with music by Judy Utting. Pictured is Darren Webster as Charles Wesley.



Kidz Korna!

Welcome everyone to this month's Kidz Korna. I've just got in from choir practice where we were practising songs for Christmas. The hymn writer Colin Gibson wrote, "Look toward Christmas! Advent is here. Welcome December, changing the year." Advent is a time when we think about the coming of Jesus who came to give hope and bring peace, joy and love to all people.



Children making stars (from left) Lara and Tristan Anderson, Thomas Elliott, partly obscured Lindsay Bettany (teacher) and Akesa Waqairatu.

ADVENT IS HERE

By the time you read this everyone will have celebrated the first Sunday in Advent.

At St John's in Hamilton the children are busy making stars to decorate their Christmas tree. Someone asked, "Why are we having stars. Can't we have angels like last year?" This made me think about why we put decorations on our trees. Here are three. I'm sure you can find lots more.

First, why do we have stars? The star of Bethlehem guided the three wise men to

Jesus. The star is also a sign of prophecy that was fulfilled long ago and gives hope to people today.

Second, why do we have angels? An angel told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus.

Third, why do we have bells? Bells ring out to guide lost sheep to the fold. It reminds us that all are precious to God. He wants no-one to be lost.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN NINA GRAHAM AND LINDSAY BETTANY

NINA: Nana, why are the ladies (from Women's Fellowship) putting candy canes on their tree? They look very yummy.

NANA: The candy canes are the shape of a shepherd's crook. The shepherds used these to bring lost lambs to the fold.

NINA: Why do they have red and white stripes?

NANA: The red stripe represents the blood of Christ which was given for us and the white is for purity and love.

NINA: Thank you, Nana. I was really surprised with what you told me. Now I know much more about candy canes.



WORD SEARCH

Can you find the 16 words in the Word Search? They run up and down, left to right and diagonally. When you have found them there are six letters remaining that spell a meaning of Advent.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | S | G | N | O | S | M | S |
| P | A | C | S | O | N | E | A |
| E | D | Z | T | M | M | H | M |
| A | V | J | A | A | Y | E | T |
| C | E | O | R | R | H | L | S |
| E | N | Y | L | I | E | H | I |
| P | T | D | O | G | N | T | R |
| O | C | A | N | D | L | E | H |
| H | G | A | N | R | O | B | C |

The words are:
advent, angel,
Bethlehem, born,
candle,
Christmas, God,
hope, hymns,
joy, love, Mary,
Nazareth, peace,
songs, and star.

BOOK REVIEW

Amazing Tales of Aotearoa

As told by Glenn Colquhoun
Illustrated by Ali Teo
Reviewed by Doreen Lennox



Did you know that the Guitar was once a young woman? Or how Toaster and Electric toothbrush came to quarrel?

Glenn Colquhoun has retold many of the Maori myths we all know so well in a fresh and contemporary way that will appeal to today's children.

Hereata and Brianne listen to the stories of the gods, learn how Maui got fire, how he fished up the land and slowed the sun as well as several stories not heard before.

The book is really exciting with one story told in rap and another in comic form. It is full of colour, both in language and illustrations.

This book was written for children but I as an adult really enjoyed this fresh approach to some old traditional tales.



150 years of Methodism in Mahurangi



The 150th anniversary was a chance for the Phillips sisters to get together. From left (bearing their married names): Joyce Turner, Ngaire Watkins and Kathleen Vincent.

The 150th anniversary of Methodism in Mahurangi was an occasion for old friends and families to gather and celebrate. The commemorations took place at the Warkworth Methodist Church, beginning on the evening of Friday, October 16th.

They began with a time of mixing and mingling, followed by a service at which greetings were received from Rev Malcolm Sellers in Warkworth,

UK. Past presbyter Rev Warwick Hambleton spoke of his experiences in the parish and Rev Bill Chessum recalled his early days growing up in the area.

On Saturday 17th, 70 folk took off on a bus tour of some of the many and varied old preaching spots in the district, including Port Albert and Pakiri.

The group enjoyed lunch at the Wellsford Church, and afternoon tea at Snells Beach

Community Church. Then president Rev Jill van de Geer cut the anniversary birthday cake with the help of Ron Rhodes and Mary Joyce.

Community Church.

The day ended with a splendid dinner served by the local RSA. Speakers Kathleen Rowe, David Parker, Ralph Witten and Sheilah Toms talked movingly of what their faith and the church has meant to them throughout their lives, and about their connections with the area.

Over the years a number of people have entered into ministry through the Mahurangi Parish.

Then president Rev Jill van de Geer and vice president Ron Gibson preached a valued and challenging sermon on Sunday morning and introduced the congregation to two new hymns. The church was full of music and singing with organ, piano, violin and trumpet.

So ended a weekend that was buzzing from start to finish with humour, rich remembrances, and challenges to greet tomorrow with an open heart and mind.



Deborah Corban Loftus (right) acknowledges Shirley Murray as a Fellow of the Hymn Society.

Justice theme of hymn conference

The New Zealand Hymn Book trust came up with a novel way to launch its new book *Hope is Our Song*. It held a conference on justice, peace and creation, key themes in the new collection of 148 hymns, carols, and songs.

The conference took place in the last week of October in Palmerston North and featured talks and discussions by hymn writers and scholars.

Faith Williamson attended the conference and reports that it was opened by Palmerston North mayor Jono Naylor, who acknowledged the hours of work from writers, composers, and editors that go into producing a volume of hymns.

Along with lots of talk, Faith says during 'spare time' between workshops and keynote speeches, people learned and sang many of the hymns from the new collection.

"A unique service of song and spirit was held on the Sunday evening in the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. It involved dancers, musicians, splendid organ

inventions in the style of Bach, together with many of the new hymns from *Hope is Our Song*," Faith says.

In one conference session American musicians and composers Jim and June Strathdee (authors of 'I am the Light of the World'), gave a global perspective on peace and justice issues. They shared their experiences of song workshops in North America, Central America and southern India, and their work with communities of the poor. They used a variety of musical instruments including guitar, ukulele, harmonica and piano to share their passion for music and missionary work.

During the conference Deborah Corban Loftus from the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada honoured Kiwi hymn writer Shirley Murray with the title of fellow of the Hymn Society. Shirley is now SE Murray FHS.

Other presenters at the conference were Clive Pearson, Colin Gibson, Ann Perrin, Roy Tankersley, and John Thornley.

Remembering early Methodist churches in Christchurch

METHODIST ARCHIVES

By Frank Paine

December 2009 marks the 150th anniversary of the second Methodist Church in Christchurch. The first Methodist service held in Christchurch was conducted in a whare in Hagley Park, owned by Isaac Philpott, in 1851. Later services were held in private residences and in a carpenter's shop.

On Sunday 16 April 1854, Reverend John Aldred opened the first Wesleyan church building on a section in High Street. Built of wood and standing on land given by John Broughton, the church seated 200 worshippers and was reputed to be the largest building in Christchurch at the time.

By 1858 it became evident that Wesleyans in Christchurch needed a larger church and a new church was built next to the first church. This church was opened on Christmas Day, 25 December 1859, and the original church beside it was used as a Sunday School.

Within five years, this second High Street Church became too small for the rapidly growing congregation. A section on the corner of Durham Street and Chester Street was bought and the foundation stone of the church was laid by the



On Christmas, 1859, Christchurch Wesleyans opened their second church. It was situated next to the city's first Wesleyan Church on High Street

superintendent of the Canterbury Province, Mr S Bealey. When the Durham Street Church was opened on Christmas Day 1864, it was said to be the largest Methodist church in the Southern Hemisphere.

After the Durham Street Church was completed, the High Street Church was sold to Mr H Chapman for £5,800 and the building was put to a different use.

The Lyttelton Times reported on 9 December 1881: "After the sale, the front portion of the building was converted into two shops, while the back portion was devoted to the purpose of a general hall. It was sometimes known as Spensley's Music Hall, and was at one time the headquarters of an early musical society. The hall witnessed some exciting political

meetings and addresses, notably one by Sir William (then Mr) Fox on the subject of temperance. It was used for concerts, penny readings, panoramas etc. The building was later purchased by Messrs H Hay & Co. who turned it into a draper's shop, known as 'The Hall'. In 1881 the building was demolished to make way for larger premises for Hay & Co."

The centenary of the first High Street Church was observed in March 1954. The President of the Methodist Church, Reverend H L Fiebig dedicated a plaque on what was then Woolworth's building in High Street, the site of the first Methodist chapels.

The Methodist Archives has a photocopy of the original letter giving permission for the plaque to be put on the building, and its location on the south-east corner of the building.

Over the last 55 years, with many changes in ownership of the building, the Methodist Church has ensured the plaque remains. The building has now been turned into a number of shops, and today the plaque can be found next to Levi's shop in High Street.

Konifelenisi Metotisi 'o NZ 2009



Ko e fekita tapu 'a Rev Taufu mo Seini Fili mo Palesiteni Alan Upson mo Lana Lazarus (Tok Palesiteni) hili 'a e fakamalo 'a e Konifelenisi na'e 'e he Palesiteni Maloalo Rev Jill van de Geer na'a ne fakamalo ai ki he Konifelenisi 'o e SUTT he ta'u 'e 30tupu 'o e ui faifekau fakataimi (secondment) mei Tonga 'aia neongo kuo ngata ia ka 'oku hoko atu maafana 'a e fetu'utaki fakatautehina mo e fetokoni'aki fakakonifelenisi. "Ko Siutaisa uitou 'o Peseti Tukutau na'e 'iai mo Sifa Tukutau he ouau lotu fakafeta'i ma 'ae kau fakafongona konifelenisi ne pekia he vaha'ata'u fakakonifelenisi."



Ko e Fakamalo 'a Rev Dr 'Ahio ki he ta'u 'e 30 tupu ne fie ngaue'aki ai 'ehe Konifelenisi Metotisi 'o NZ 'a e kau faifekau mei Tonga pea 'oku ne fiefia 'i he hoko atu 'a e fakatautehina fakakonifelenisi.



Ko Rev Taniela Moala (ta'u 73) na'e kau 'i he kau faifekau 'o e Konifelenisi kuo hoko ko e kau Faifekau Maloalo. Koia 'a e fuofua faifekau Pule 'o e Vahenga Ngaue Aokalani Manukau, pea ko e fuofua faifekau Sea ia 'i he hoko 'a e Komiti Fale'i Tonga ko e Vahefonua Tonga.



Ko Rev 'Alipate 'Uhila na'e fakanofa ko e Faifekau Hoko, 'oku na tufa mo Sini 'a hono hoa 'a e Sakalameniti kia Mele Halapua.



Ko e kau Hiva 'a e 'Api-Siasi Kosipeli na'a nau hiva mo e kau ifi fakataha mo e kau 'Angelo na'a nau fakatokolahi 'a e hiva.



Ko e kau fakafongona konifelenisi mei Henderson



Ko e Faifekau Sea Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune mo Seini Fili



Ko e Kau Tangata'eiki Fakalaumalie Lata ki he 'Otumui



Ko e kau Faifekau Kepu Moa, Savenata Moala, Dr Ahio, Inoke Siulangapo mo Tavake Manu.