



Let this moment be our turning point for children

Dr Claire Achmad, Chief Children's Commissioner, acknowledges the vast scale of the anguish, harm and trauma of the abuse experienced by children and young people in state and faith-based care in our recent history. She invites us all to work towards creating a place where all children and vulnerable adults are safe, loved and treated as taonga.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions has publicly released its landmark report, *Whanaketia – through pain and trauma, from darkness to light*. I'm aware that the Methodist Church of New Zealand has been part of this Inquiry, including participation from Connexion members and in wider settings, such as at the church's Wesley College.

I want to acknowledge the vast scale of the anguish, harm and trauma of the abuse experienced by children and young people in state and faith-based care in our recent history. I know this has intergenerational impacts, and the ripples are continuing to be felt by thousands of survivors.

It's impossible to take in the findings of the report without feeling an immense sense of sadness and regret for the pain suffered by those who should have been cherished as taonga. I respect the deep courage of the survivors who have shared their experiences through the Inquiry, and express my sadness for those who could not, including those who died while in care, or before they were able to tell their stories.

Any abuse experienced by a child or young person creates lifelong and often intergenerational trauma. And despite this, children and young people are still continuing to be abused in homes, communities and in State care today. We must not only embrace this moment to face up to the reality of the past and the present, but we must choose to make it a turning point for our country, and the children and young people of today and tomorrow. It's now up to every one of us to listen deeply to the life experiences and mamae of survivors, to support healing, act on their voices and solutions, and work together to build a safer future for all children and young people.

I know that the journey to come to this point in the Inquiry has not been easy, and that it's highlighted deep pain and regret. For survivors, I am conscious that revisiting the most traumatic time of their lives might be the hardest thing they have ever done. Many lives were taken, and many lives could not reach their fullest potential. Many families have been broken, with relationships and a sense of belonging and identity taken away.

I commend your church leaders in fronting up to the abuse your history has been a part of. I've no doubt this is confronting, and yet it is essential to listen deeply, acknowledge, and understand. In the spirit of your faith, I acknowledge the spaces you have had to navigate through, as you've heard the traumatic stories of abuse from survivors, and continue to reflect on how contradicting these experiences are to the mission of Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

I am very clear that the decades of abuse and pain experienced by generations of children and young people while in the care of the State and faith-based institutions is a national shame.



LET THIS BE A TURNING POINT

To be an effective independent advocate for and with children and young people – including those who are in the care of the State or who have been – I regularly listen to children and

young people who want me, and the rest of our country, to understand that the State still needs to do better to listen and acknowledge what matters to them, in order for healing to really begin. I have heard powerful calls to action from rangatahi abused in the care of the State more recently, and I amplify their calls. They want future generations to be free from the painful experiences they are living through. And I hope that our government, our faith leaders, our communities and all of us are able to honour the survivors of those abused in care by making the real, tangible change that is so much needed.

Although hope has been so severely dimmed through the abuse experienced, I believe that we can now choose to take a more hopeful path, towards whakamarama – enlightenment. An essential step we can and must take is to recognise the mana of every child in our country. I encourage everyone to take up any opportunity to actively understand the rights of every child, and play your part in whatever way possible to create joy, love, and hope in the lives of the children and young people around you, supporting them to flourish to their full potential. And if you think a child is being harmed, don't look away: listen to them, speak up, and act to make sure they are safe.

This report must not be seen as a one-off call to action. We need to be continuously working on this as a nation. It's all of our responsibility to end the horrific abuse that is undeniably part of our recent history and our present, so we make Aotearoa New Zealand a safe, caring, and inclusive place to be a child.

The recommendations of this report are vast. This shows the breadth and depth of the efforts now needed from all of us for the children and young people of Aotearoa New Zealand, and especially our Māori, Pasifika, Rainbow and disabled children and young people.

This report calls for action, for healing and for justice. With the commitment of the Government to fulfil each and every one of the 138 recommendations, and the commitments across our Parliament to work together to make change, I hope to see systemic change. I encourage you to make real this change across your Connexion, to recognise the innate rights of all children and young people.

For me, the stark findings of the report and the ambition its recommendations hold for the future require a deeper commitment to children and young people's rights and wellbeing that is above politics, above denominations of any one faith, and is central to the inherent dignity of all children, going to the very heart of the love and happiness that all children should grow up surrounded by. Let's all be committed to change in our everyday lives.

Hold the hope for the Māori, Pasifika and Whaikaha congregations of your church. Create any opportunity to have young people at the forefront of your decision-making, and encourage them in all you do.

At Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission we have a moemoeā – a vision – and I know it will resonate with you, too. It's 'Kia kuru pounamu te rongo – all mokopuna live their best lives.'

We can make this real through a united community working together to build a kinder, more inclusive future. Let's collectively create an Aotearoa New Zealand that is free of all forms of abuse



Tongan Centennial Conference Outstanding in Every Aspect

TeRito Peyroux-Semu, Vice President

President Peter and I, along with over 250 other participants from our Hāhi, who were mostly from Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, had the privilege and pleasure of being part of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga's Centennial Conference and Celebrations, held in Nuku'alofa, in the Kingdom of Tonga at the end of June.

The theme of the Centennial Conference was Fakalotofo'ou, which I understood to be the renewal or revival, particularly of the heart, mind, and spirit.

Like the church Conferences of the past, this one brought together representatives from the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga's Synods (or Vahefonua) throughout the different islands of Tonga, and various parts of the world, as well as representatives from their wider Tongan Methodist and Ecumenical families.

According to the Minutes of the Conference, this year there were around 2945 participants in total, which included all the official delegates and guests (around 490 people), as well as the observers, members of the various choirs, support staff and volunteers. Given the significance of this celebration, and the ways in which so many people throughout the island (regardless of their church affiliations or not) were either involved in the preparations and hosting, or just warmly welcomed to enjoy the feasts, festivities and atmosphere, the total number of people present at the grounds during certain parts of the programme would have easily been much higher than this.

A few evenings we were treated to Pōhiva, Choral Services, which in addition to giving opportunity to hear about the work and reflections of different members of Conference (on topics like overseas missions, ministry, history and education), also showcased the spectacular musical repertoire of the various choirs and brass bands that were in attendance, including our own.

Like our Conference, in addition to the discussions and decisions made during the business sessions, there were also significant services marking the Opening of the Conference, the Induction and Covenant Renewal of the President and General Secretary, a time of Remembrance and Memorial for those who had passed away since the last Conference, the Recognition of Retiring Ministers, and the Ordination of new Ministers.

Another significant service was the Centennial Conference Service on the Friday morning (day five of eight), led by His Majesty King Tupou VI and accompanied by members of the royal household and nobility. In his sermon, His Majesty noted some of the poignant history and journey, which have shaped the aspirations of the church over the last one hundred years. He also offered considerations for the way that the church might efficiently move forward.

The main highlight of this Centennial Conference for me, was the profound way that this church actually has and does move forward, whilst still holding on to so much of its rich cultural history, heritage and identity.

A mere glance at the Conference participant numbers and make-up, gives us a huge clue about the level of organisational advancement, expertise and sophistication demanded from those working in the administrative, communications and logistics areas of the Conference and church: Yet every participant knew where they were going, staying or needing to be; voices and instruments were sufficiently amplified during the services and sessions in both the Centenary Church, as well as the programmes during the mealtimes at the Maamaloa Grounds; texts, orders of service, agendas and even Conference minutes were efficiently projected or printed and provided; translation services were offered for those of us who didn't speak Tongan; quality livestreaming services were available for those who weren't able to be



VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

there in person; transportation and transfers, particularly for the visiting groups, were diligently considered and often even initiated, at times even by the same teams of amazing conference and church support staff and volunteers. And easily accessible spaces on site were also made available for light refreshments, and alternative seating areas in between sessions, services and meals, as well as professional medical assistance, in the event of any first aid or medical emergencies.

Some of my favourite times, were mealtimes (LOL!). While I am very grateful for the generous range of culinary delicacies (especially the fresh seafood and local produce) on offer throughout the Conference -and these far exceed anything I think I could ever imagine having anywhere else in the world - the reason why the mealtimes were my favourite times, was because of the way they were organised and hosted, as well as the way they have been adjusted, in response to some intentional collective reflection.

In recent years, the number of mealtimes each day was reduced from four to two, Brunch and Dinner, as a practical measure, making things easier for hosting groups, whilst also being mindful about consumption. This year things progressed even further, where there was a call to significantly reduce the use of plastic throughout Conference, especially during the mealtimes. For a gathering of this size, where different families that are rostered for catering, prepare most of the fare offsite and bring it in to be served, this was no mean feat! It required extra time to carefully prepare and transport food and equipment on to the grounds. People had to spend more time washing up dishes, crockery, glassware and cutlery, and afterwards more equipment had to be carefully packed and then transported offsite. The result was a huge reduction of plastic waste and rubbish at the end of each meal, let alone at the end of each day.

During the same times that we were served our meals, we were also presented with the opportunity to observe and engage with some of the most perspicacious and meaningful oratory, insights and presentations by elders, representatives and even descendants of significant families, clans and hosting districts. As the whakatauki Māori reminds us: Ko te kai a te Rangatira, he kōrero, he kōrero (Knowledge and Communication is the food of Chiefs/Leaders), it was a distinctive and sometimes quite emotional highlight, during the times of the day where there were certainly a lot more younger generations present, to also observe, listen, learn from, or just simply bask amidst the rich, beautiful kōrero of their elders, leaders, family, community and church.





Tribe 801 Making Waves on the Music Scene

Music has always been a mainstay of Methodism and students at Wesley College are writing and performing songs that build on those strong traditions.

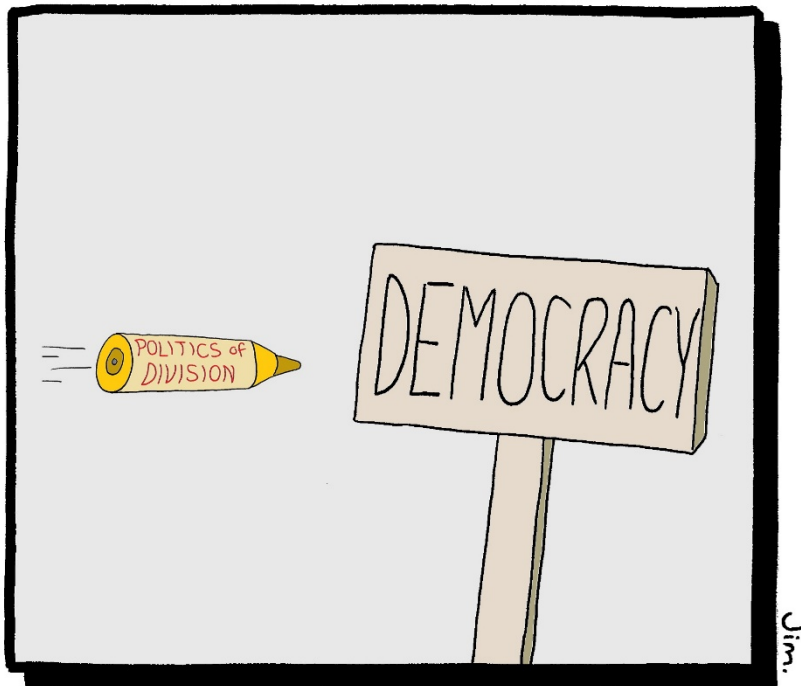
In late June, Tribe 801 was one of 12 bands chosen to perform at the BNZ Theatre events centre for the Smokefree Tangata Beats Auckland Regional Final. The students performed two original songs.

One of those songs titled *We Are One* was recently nominated as a finalist in the Play It Strange Peace Song competition. As finalists, Tribe 801 will get to spend a day at a professional recording studio where their song will be recorded, mastered and put onto the 2024 Peace Song digital album.

Tausisi Amituanai is the Tribe 801 drummer and band manager. The Year 13 student enjoys the camaraderie of performing with his fellow friends and musicians including Kolo Vainikolo on guitar, Tapiwa Mupfudza on keys, with Leilani Mua, Brooklyn Tilton-Mist and Catherine Anitoni as the vocalists. Both Tausisi and Leilani also playing bass. Tausisi says the girls typically write the lyrics and the guys take the words and sort the instrumental arrangements.

Like other members of the group, Tausisi performs music outside of his school commitments including at church. Next year he is planning to join the army and hopefully will become a member of the NZ Army Band.

Tribe 801 has been in existence long before Tausisi joined the band as a Year 12 student last year – he recalls his sister being involved when Tribe 801 made the Auckland Smokefree regional finals in 2022. The band name is a nod to the school address; Wesley College is located at 801 Paerata Road, Paerata.



Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

Our regular cartoon that seeks to find the funny side of faith

Another bullet still to be dodged...



Connecting with and Celebrating our Youth

International Youth Day is celebrated on 12 August. The purpose of the annual event is to bring youth issues to the attention of the international community and celebrate the potential of youth as partners in today's global society.

Simulata Pope reports on the contribution of MCNZ youth leaders and how we can engage with them to encourage their voice and involvement.

In July we were blessed to meet with youth leaders across our Connexion to discuss the work they do as young leaders and the work of Te Hāpai o ki muri. Youth leaders from every Synod both from Taiuiwi and Te Hāhi districts, gathered for the weekend at the Whakatuora Centre in Auckland and participated in an insightful korero of all things youth ministry.

The weekend focused on sessions for our leaders to understand the current context of our church, country and the context of why this work of Te Hāpai o ki muri is important.

We began by first checking in with each other and touching base on how we all are as leaders. Part of the weekend was acknowledging the mana our youth ministry leaders have and engaging with each other first as people before we engage with each other as workers.

Michael Lemanu led a wonderful session that took us back to understanding our bi-cultural journey and our historical context. Michael played an inspiring short documentary, voiced-over by some of the initial members responsible for establishing the bi-cultural journey within our church.

I then facilitated a session considering the current landscape of our young people within Aotearoa - the issues seen and led by young people in our country, through various of ways such as politics with Te Tiriti and youth justice. We discussed environment raising issues such as climate change, and other issues affecting our church including The Royal Commission of Inquiry of Abuse in State Care and Faith-Based Institutions.

We discussed the model of Te Hāpai and the understandings of what has been so far. This helped shaped the feedback of what these youth leaders hoped for not only in this work but also in breathing life into our wider church. We discussed what spiritual leaders need in order to work with young people, and what youth participation looks like in enabling youth voice across all decisions for our church.

We concluded our weekend with a Taiuiwi Youth ministry first; communion conducted and led by one of our own youth leaders. Previously we have always needed to ask a minister to come and conduct this for us. This was a hopeful sign about what lies ahead for our church and our young people.

Throughout the weekend, we were inspired and confronted - leaders expressed that not much has changed for young people and the opportunities for youth voice. There are clear sentiments and challenges which lie ahead for our church in ensuring it is a safe space for all our young people. On the other hand, this weekend was seen to have the same hope as the time that the bi-cultural journey began. This change for our church is pivotal, hopeful, and inspiring. Our young people believe this aspect of our church will awaken faith and become a wider benefit to addressing issues faced in the country. Getting together in the same room is the first and most important step towards taking us in the right direction.

A significant part of International Youth Day is that the day becomes an opportunity to celebrate and mainstream young peoples' voices, actions, and initiatives, as well as their meaningful, universal, and equitable engagement.

We acknowledge that more is needed to celebrate youth voice amongst our Connexion and that we need to look at the opportunities we are providing for young people to raise issues that matter to them.

I encourage you to take a young person out for the day and celebrate who they are!



Lay Preacher Sunday Support and Recognition

As congregations and parishes prepare for Lay Preacher's Sunday in August, **Lute Taufalele-Vute President** of the New Zealand Lay Preacher Association (NZLPA), encourages parishes to consider the roles and responsibilities of lay preachers, and the congregations they serve.

When our Hutt City Uniting Congregation (HCUC) met recently to plan for the day, it became evident that not all our lay preachers were accredited. To be an accredited lay preacher in the MCNZ there are training requirements and a succinct description on the MCNZ website.

What about the rest? Are the lay preachers who have been taking services receiving adequate support and recognition for what they do? Or is it presumed their name will just roll over into the next preaching plan? Much of the 'upskilling' lay preachers do is self-directed. Just because we make it look easy, does not mean it is.

Support for Lay Preachers

Over the past decade the need for lay preachers has increased, as the financial burden of supporting a half or full-time presbyter has become unachievable for some parishes. HCUC is fortunate to have a skilled team of almost 30 lay preachers, rotating within six congregations. Later this year, our parish convenor for lay preachers, Lyn Price, will celebrate her long service of 60 years of lay preaching. What an accomplishment!

As the President of the NZLPA, my hopes and aspirations for lay preachers in Aotearoa include:

1. Creating and fostering a better relationship amongst lay preachers locally, nationally, and ecumenically.
2. Sharing ideas when it comes to more desirable resources. For example, Philip Garside, an esteemed Wellington-based publisher is an invaluable resource for me when I prepare services.
3. Celebrating and encouraging parish gatherings, nationally, involving speakers who will inspire existing lay preachers and spark curiosity in the new. These include local speakers not necessarily in your denomination. There are also musicians within our parishes willing to help lay preachers, if only they were asked.

Training

The NZLPA website suggests training courses that are available. Courses offered at the University of Otago and Trinity Methodist Theological College. There are also papers and courses available within our cultural synods. We should be encouraging our lay preachers to take these courses, even if it is only a paper at a time.

Let us be honest, we have dropped the ball on this one. As a collective, we have not always acknowledged or supported the lay preachers within our congregations and parishes as much as we could have.

On Lay Preacher's Sunday, Hutt City Uniting Congregations will present certificates in recognition of the work that our lay preachers - accredited and in-training - have done and continue to do to preach the Good News which is Jesus Christ. This is a small step in the right direction.

I encourage your parish and congregations to support and acknowledge your lay preacher(s).



Farm Returns Supporting Talented and Troubled Rangatahi

Taranaki farmland, originally bequeathed to the Methodist Church in trust to provide an orphanage in Kaponga, is providing funding for a range of programmes and study opportunities that could not have been envisaged by the benefactor, Robert Gibson when he died in 1932.

In the last financial year, ending 31 May 2024, the Robert Gibson Methodist Trust (RGMT) distributed a record \$259,000 to support local youth ministry, grants to tertiary and Wesley College students, and to an organisation providing residential support and life skills for disadvantaged and troubled youth. Grants also included \$5,000 for repairs and maintenance of the Robert Gibson Memorial Hall, in Manaia, South Taranaki and \$9,000 for mission resourcing.

The past year has been busy for the Trustees. Beyond farm oversight, assessing grant applications and arranging disbursements, they have overseen the construction of a new home on one of two farms under their jurisdiction. Chairman Bill Yateman is one of ten Board members responsible for fund distribution, governance and capital expenditure on the farms. There were originally three properties but to increase productivity, two smaller entities were amalgamated in 2014, and a new milking facility was built on the block. The result is a far more profitable 123-hectare farm known as Totara Farm, which accommodates 380 Friesian cows. Maire Farm shares the eastern boundary and grazes 330 cows over 118 hectares. Sharemilkers are responsible for the day-to-day running of each entity, with the support of a farm consultant.

Manna Youth Home

A residential facility for vulnerable youth facing challenges has benefitted from an annual \$30,000 RGMT contribution for the past three years. **Manna Youth Home** was established in 2020 by the Bishop's Action Foundation, a charitable organisation dedicated to creating flourishing communities. Located in a repurposed care centre in the seaside suburb of Oakura, south of New Plymouth, Manna has turned around the lives of many 16- to 21-year-olds experiencing difficulties.

Residents are generally referred by social service agencies or the police. At Manna, they are supported by a team of dedicated and experienced youth workers who provide specialised counselling, care and mentoring. The rangatahi are encouraged to gain skills, create relationships, build trust and resilience, and establish cultural connections as they are presented with new life experiences and opportunities.

Bill and other RGMT members have visited the home and seen firsthand the transformative effect of the facility on the people it is designed to serve. "We have been out there a couple of times and met the people involved. One young man who had been there for three weeks said it had turned his life around."

Students Supported

This year, grants totalling \$90,000 were made to Wesley College students on the recommendation of the College. Bill says about 20 students receive support from the Trust each year. Tertiary students in need of financial support are also encouraged to apply for grants and on average 30 to 35 students from all over New Zealand have their applications approved. In the past year, 35 students received a share of grants totalling \$113,000.



He Kupu mō te Whakatūwhera Whare

Rev Keita Hotere

On 6 July people gathered at the James Buller Memorial Centre in Dargaville to celebrate the completion of a renovation project that has seen a treasured legacy building restored for use by the wider community.

Nā reira kia pai koe ki te manaaki i te whare o tāu pononga, kia pūmau tonu ai ki tōu aroaro; nāu hoki e Ihowā, e te Atua, te kupu; ā, hei tāu manaaki te manaaki mō te whare o tāu pononga ā ake ake. 2 Hamuera 7:29. (Words from the opening karakia.)

Reflecting on the event, local Minita-a-iwi Hoana Flay says, "Today was a celebration of legacy, connections and faith. Te Atua was the focal point of our gathering to rededicate and reaffirm our commitment to one another and to the teachings of Christ".

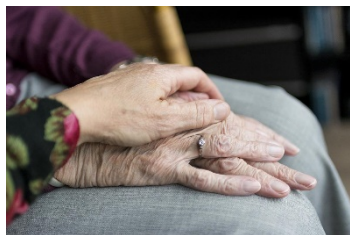
The karakia was led by Hoana Flay, Glen Hauraki, Keita Hotere and Ellie Topia Ripia. Attendees included members of the Taitokerau Rohe, the wider Northern Wairoa community and members from Tamaki and Waikato Rohe.

Jaanine Harris shared, "James Buller leaves behind a legacy of faith and inspiration to his family many of whom have followed in his missionary footsteps." Jaanine, a descendant of Eliza Jane Buller, was amongst many welcomed to the rededication service. Eliza was the younger sister to the pioneer Wesleyan missionary Rev. James Buller from whom the centre is named. The family emigrated to New Zealand from Helston Cornwall. They landed in Dunedin and eventually James Buller made his way to Tangiteroria. There he came under the care and protection of rangatira Tirarau and his people. Later he moved further south to a Mission House built at Mangawhare Mount Wesley.

Rex Nathan shared, "It's been an awesome journey (the renovation journey). It's been great having hāhi members back to support the kaupapa. Karakia continues once a month on the 1st Sunday of the month at Oturei marae and occasionally at the newly rededicated centre. There's been lots of interest from people in the community, people that want a place to hold meetings for a couple of hours, or longer. Going forward it will be an asset for the Rohe."

Thanks were expressed to Te Taha Māori Property Trust and the staff in bringing this refurbished space to life. The collective effort of all those involved in this renovation project has transformed this building into a true treasure for the Taitokerau Rohe.





Dementia Care Demands a Big Toll

Rev Dr Susan Thompson

I was shocked but not surprised to read recently that some studies have shown that carers for whānau living with dementia frequently die before the person they are caring for.

Working at Tamahere I meet many families of people with dementia. Whether their loved one is at home or living in our care home, they all find the dementia journey incredibly difficult.

It's hugely painful to watch someone you love gradually lose the ability to think clearly, to control their emotions, to make good decisions and even to remember who they are. People can change in unexpected challenging ways and this is a cause of grief and loss.

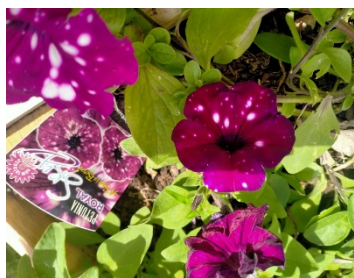
As the disease progresses and symptoms become worse, families often struggle to keep loved ones at home. They are constantly on watch to keep people safe and sometimes their own mental and/or physical health suffers. When decisions need to be made about a higher level of care, they frequently feel distressed and guilty.

The dementia journey can be a very lonely and isolating experience. The nature of the disease means that whānau with dementia often become reluctant to socialise. They feel safer in familiar environments. Too many people or too much stimulation can make them feel overwhelmed. As a result, carers can also become isolated.

Sometimes friends and even other family members fall away. Some people are scared by the changes they see. They would rather remember someone as they were, not realising that that person is still there. Others simply don't understand. The dementia journey is so difficult that it's hard to understand unless you've had experience of it yourself.

All of these things mean that carers are under huge pressure and need support. Last year at Tamahere we started a support group for the families and friends of whānau living with dementia. We meet every month and offer people a space where they can share their experiences, hear from staff and other health professionals, ask questions, learn how to navigate the available support services and most importantly talk about self-care.

Self-care isn't easy but, as those who've been on the dementia journey the longest know, it's essential if carers are to stay well. Members of our group encourage each other to take regular breaks, explore day programmes for their loved ones or respite care, look after their health and stay connected to friends and family. They know from sometimes hard experiences that they can't care for whānau if they aren't taking care of themselves.



Sensory Garden - an outdoor space that stimulates the senses.

Mereana Rewha, HMSS Funding Coordinator

Hamilton Methodist Social Services run several community programme's designed to connect and empower students in the disability communities. Our Sensory Garden is a safe space for our Brain Gym students to enjoy the calming and engaging environment.

What is Brain Gym?

Brain gym is a weekly hour-long programme that we run at HMSS for those with disabilities and limited abilities (eg non-verbal). Clients from different disability organisations come along with their caregivers to enjoy a session of stimulation and support under the guidance of our amazing tutor Charlie Harris-Dobbs. The programme provides different activities for people in the disability sector like block building, play dough and different tactile experiences.

Brain Gym Plus was created when we saw an opportunity for those with extremely high needs.

What inspired you to create the sensory garden?

Charlie was inspired to create a sensory garden for her Brain Gym students after a visit to Kia Roha, a community organisation that supports children with disabilities and their whanau. Charlie noticed that her students enjoyed the outdoors during the warmer weather, so the concept of a sensory garden evolved from this.

The Brain Gym programme is held in the auditorium at the Methodist Centre. The auditorium has doors that open out to the garden and they can also see the bright mural painted on the adjacent building wall.

What are the benefits of the garden?

The garden provides a safe outdoor space that stimulates sensory awareness and promotes cognitive wellbeing. It is another space for our clients to hang out. We have plants that tackle the human senses. There is an abundance of colour and different shaped flowers and plants that stimulate visually. A variety of herbs, petunia and lavender plants stimulate the sense of smell. For taste we plant herbs like basil and mint. For touch we plant snap dragons which snap when pressed together and lambs' ear that has a soft texture. compared to other leaves that are rougher to feel.

Do you have any other projects in mind for the Brain Gym?

Absolutely! Charlie wants to create an indoor space, a dark room; a calm environment where there are pillows and beanbags, dim lights with perhaps a small projector playing a repetitive image. This will be in contrast to the space we currently have, which is more hands on and busy.

We would like to extend a special thanks to the many individuals and organisations that have contributed to our garden: The Methodist Church, Derald (volunteer builder), Bunnings, Les Harrison Transport, Mitre 10, Jay Collins, Yates NZ, The Plant Depot, Aromatic, Kaea Hongara, Naomi Paekau, Mereana's children, the Boynton whanau, Daltons Landscape, Wairere Nursery, Captain Compost Landscape Supplies, Payless Plants and The Plant Place.



Reflections from the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

MCNZ General Secretary Rev Tara Tautari reports on her recent visit to Nairobi, Kenya.

From July 5-11, I had the privilege of attending the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism meeting, held at the All Africa Conference of Churches headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. In my capacity as Vice Moderator

of the Commission, I co-facilitated this significant gathering, which brought together theologians, heads of church institutions, religious scholars, and church leaders from around the globe. Our discussions focused on crucial questions related to colonialism, decolonisation, reparations, and restoration within the context of mission and evangelism.

One of the central themes of our discussions was the intricate relationship between land, creation, and mission. This is an area where our unique perspective from Aotearoa New Zealand provided valuable insights. I had the opportunity to share our own origins and mission story, *Maea te Kupu* and shared the story of missionaries and fences at the Kaeo mission, where land was divided and controlled. This imagery resonated deeply with participants and sparked powerful reflections on the historical impacts of colonialism and the need for restorative justice in mission practices. Our Climate Justice Decade initiative, *Rekindle the Vā of Papatūānuku*, also captured the imaginations of attendees. It was heartening to see how our local experiences and initiatives could contribute to the broader discourse on mission and creation care.

The sharing of local context is crucial in global gatherings, where it is easy to get caught up in high-level discussions with a focus on theology and doctrine. The lived reality and experiences of people and their communities can often be overlooked, which diminishes the value and impact of the meeting. Highlighting local stories and initiatives ensures that the conversation remains grounded and relevant, ultimately enriching the overall discourse and fostering more meaningful and effective outcomes.

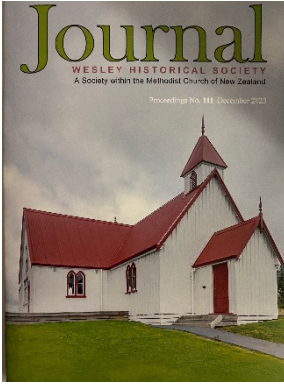
Interestingly, our meeting coincided with significant protests on the streets of Nairobi. These protests were a poignant backdrop to our discussions, highlighting the urgency of addressing systemic injustices and the need for the church to play a prophetic role in society. The *kōrero* on the streets inevitably impacted our *kōrero* within the meeting rooms. As we discussed counter-creating as a form of resistance to prevailing hegemonic powers, the protests served as a stark reminder of the realities faced by many communities around the world.

One of the key takeaways from our discussions was the necessity for churches to maintain a strong prophetic voice in the public sphere. We must resist being co-opted by governments or other powerful entities and instead advocate for justice, equity, and peace. The protests in Nairobi underscored the importance of this stance, as they reflected the community's call (led as they were in this case by the youth) for accountability and systemic change.

Looking ahead, I am excited to announce that the Methodist Church of New Zealand will host a small workgroup of the Commission next year. This workgroup will include members from the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocacy Network and the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network. Our focus will be to further explore the intersection of mission, land, and spirituality.

Hosting this workgroup presents a unique opportunity for us to deepen our understanding and engagement with these critical issues. It will allow us to draw from our rich heritage and experiences in Aotearoa and contribute meaningfully to the global conversation. We will delve into how mission practices can be decolonised, how reparations and restoration can be effectively pursued, and how we can foster a more profound connection with creation.

In conclusion, the meeting in Nairobi was a deeply enriching experience. It highlighted the need to address the legacies of colonialism and underscored the church's role as a catalyst for justice and restoration. Together, let us uphold our prophetic voice and advocate for a world where justice, peace, and the well-being of all creation are realised.



Seeking Untold Stories

Rev Dr Terry Wall

Religious communities exist over time and faith is embraced, lived and shared over generations. Methodism is no exception in this regard. We tell stories that have been handed down to us. Many are familiar and have shaped our common life. But there are stories that parts of our community have not heard.

The Wesley Historical Society (WHS) publishes an annual *Journal* usually printed in January. The mandate of the WHS is to encourage research about the history of Methodism in Aotearoa New Zealand and our mission in the Pacific. Since 1930, the WHS has attracted enthusiasts who have worked to preserve our history and promote the writing of stories.

History is a dynamic discipline. It is not simply about preserving stories. The historian ponders the way in which stories have been received, considers the perspective from which they have been told and critiques received orthodoxies. Because what we see depends on where we stand, there will always be a political dimension to the analysis of our history.

This is why it is so important for the historian and the reader to be self-aware. The historian is conscious that our agendas infiltrate in the way in which we tell stories. Writing is seldom free from self-interest. Elements of justification cling to the stories we tell about ourselves. Just as there is a need to critique the claims of others, so there may be an even more important imperative for self-critique in the enterprise of history.

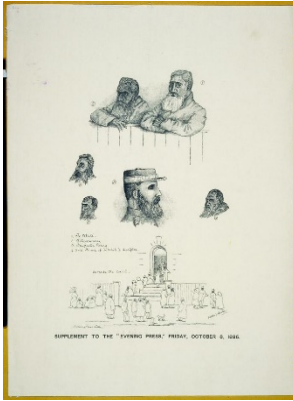
History written by those who enjoy power and privilege will interpret events and incidents, episodes, and eras from that standpoint. It will not dwell on dislocations or lament exploitations. History written by those who have been impoverished or dispossessed will read very differently. The two approaches may not cohere. The challenge is to hear the stories of others and to have a wider, more open and comprehensive appreciation of what happened.

Letting go of one interpretation in the light of the critique another offers can be a painful experience. We will resist revising our viewpoint. Old justifications can be questioned. New readings introduce us to the experience of others. But the reading of other histories can engage us in disrupting our mental framework. This is what makes history such an exciting adventure. Can we bring a spirit of openness to divergent interpretations?

The current 2023 *Journal* of the WHS features a number of untold stories. Eric Laurenson uncovers riches in the diary of Deaconess Marion Hunter from Edwardian days in Christchurch. Rob Finlay reflects as a secondary school history teacher on the new history curriculum. Carol Barron traces the story of the establishment of the Methodist Alliance. David Bell and Susan Thompson assess Dr Laws' contribution to theological education. John Roberts writes about the old Rawene Methodist Church, now serving as a residence for artists.

In addition, there is an important and favourable review of Rowan Tautari's book *Maea Te Kupu: Kaeo, He Whenua Kurahuna – Emerging stories of Methodism: Kaeo, land of hidden knowledge*. Norman Brookes reviews Donald Phillipps' book, *Methodism Toward the Future*.

We encourage you and your parish to subscribe to the *Journal* of the Wesley Historical Society. The subscription is \$35.00. The treasurer Peter Lane can arrange subscriptions for you or your parish. Email: treasurer.whs@methodist.nz. Now is a good time to take out a subscription, as in addition to the *Journal* you will receive the book, soon to be published, provisionally entitled, *Weteriana Methodism – origins and challenges*, which collects the papers presented at the WHS Conference held in 2019 to mark the bicentenary of Methodism in Aotearoa.



"... Arguably the Best General"

Riwha Titokowaru c 1823 - 1889

Rev Donald Phillipps

Some months ago I paid tribute to a Mangamuka (Hokianga) leader baptised by a missionary in the 1830s and given the name of Hohepa Otene. That name appeared for some years on the list of Stations in and around Tai Tokerau and the in the Waikato. I mistakenly assumed that this was the same person - after a break. I have been reminded that there was another young Māori leader, Riwha Titokowaru baptised with that same name, in 1842, by missionary John Skevington. These two visited Auckland in 1845, and when Skevington suddenly died suddenly, Riwha stayed on in that town for a while, improved his reading and writing skills, and made an impression on people like Walter Lawry and John Whiteley.

I regret my confusion, but I am as a result now able to honour one of the more remarkable Māori leaders of mid-19th century Aotearoa. He is well-known and the phrase used as the title above was coined by the renowned historian James Belich. I will largely use his words to summarize the life and the Wesleyan connections of this great leader.

Born in South Taranaki, Riwha was of the Ngati Manuhiakai hapu of Ngati Ruanui. Through his family and their marriage connections, he was born to be a leader – his father Hori Kingi Titokowaru was a principal leader of Ngati Ruanui in the intertribal conflict with the Waikato. He also was baptised within the Wesleyan church - Riwha did not assume his father's name until the latter died in 1848. Belich, with respect to Kiwha's later status, suggests that his whole life was a 'dialectic between race and war.' In 1850 at a peacemaking meeting at Waitotara, his speech was 'impeccably Christian.'

He moved away from pacifism and missionary Christianity to become a part of the Māori nationalist movement, opposed to land living and seeking to set up a Māori king. Later in that same decade, Riwha appears on the Stationing Sheet for the Methodist Church in Australasia – he is named a Māori Home Missionary. For a period of five or six years, his name appears, appointed to Mangatawhiri – part of the sprawling Manukau Circuit.

Belich conjectures that Riwha participated in some of the land struggles of that time in the Taranaki War of 1860-61, and it was that experience that gave rise to the judgment that is quoted in the title. On the other hand, there is this puzzling, printed record (referring to him as Hohepa Otene) acting, it might be assumed, on behalf of a missionary church. Riwha had close knowledge of affairs in Waikato, and was a supporter of the King Movement. Why was he sent to that particular place? Mangatawhiri was regarded by the King Movement as its northern boundary – not to be transgressed by colonial troops.

What expectations were there of him in this position – whom did he serve? He had already made a name for himself, though not yet 40. He was a man of mana and it may have been hoped that he would exercise a pacifying role on the borderline between tangata whenua and colonial aspirations. At this time a change was taking place in the Māori response to Christianity – the Pai Marire movement's leader died and Riwha stepped into his role, though traditional Māori religion was much more important to Titokowaru. As he became more involved in the latter, his involvement in introduced Christianity declined.

It was the former emphasis that marked the great peace campaign that began in 1867. This involved finding ways to 'placate' imperial troops, colonial government, and settlers while dealing with the hugely varied aspirations (especially concerning land) of tangata whenua. Peace meetings were widely held in Taranaki, but in the end, the impetus was lost and the confrontations resumed. That these went on as long as they did reflect Titokowaru's ability to employ limited resources to the best effect. The story of his later years is set against the background of confiscation and non-violent resistance. Titokowaru had now become a focus of attention, senior in some respects, to other tribal leaders such as Te Kooti, and Te Whiti at Partihaka. They suffered each in their way – imprisonment not least. It was probably one such experience that led to his death in 1889 at his family home at Okaiawa. His tangi was attended by 2000 people. In the end, he left an extraordinary record - one that still needs to be taken into account as the issues of the 19th century intrude on those of the 21st.