



Wasewase Ko Viti Kei Rotuma E Niu Siladi

Women's Fellowship Annual Meeting, Christchurch 31 May - 3 June, 2024

Una Tikoinaka

Theme: Women to be Instruments of Peace

Eda Kacivi Me Da I Vurevure Ni Vakacegu

Introduction

The 2024 King's Birthday Weekend Celebration at the Moraia Church was filled with the energy and excitement of many women from Wasewase Women's Fellowship Districts, including members from all six Tabacakacaka (parishes) within the Wasewase ko Viti kei Rotuma e Niu Siladi. A total of 138 women registered and more joined us throughout the weekend. Over four days and three nights, braving cold Canterbury temperatures, attendees witnessed the beauty of Christchurch city and engaged in powerful programmes.

The South Island Fijian Parish, Tabacakacaka Ni Veiwekani Ceva were enthusiastic and generous hosts. It was an honour and privilege for the Men's Fellowship and the Youth Group of our South Island Fijian Parish to carry out all related responsibilities and to ensure that our guests and visitors were fed and looked after.

On Friday the Screen South Team from Te Whatu Ora talked about the importance of regular screening and provided Self Testing Kits to those who chose to be screened on the day. Later we had a wonderful opportunity to hear from Fijian physician, Dr Taina Naivalu, who is undertaking further study at Otago University. Dr Taina talked about the damaging impacts of bacteria on health and attendees nodded their heads in affirmation as Dr Taina quoted the Fijian names of all kinds of sicknesses common and familiar at home. The day concluded with a Church Service followed by a cultural welcoming kava ceremony. We were blessed to be joined by the Superintendent of Wasewase, Rev Alipate Livani along with Rev Joeli Ducivaki.

On Saturday, guest speakers included Rev Dale Peach, South Island Synod Superintendent, Rev Tara Tautari, General Secretary of the Methodist Church New Zealand, and Deaconess Tamalesi Soro, the General Secretary of the Fijian Methodist Women's Fellowship.

Feasting is always an integral part of any gathering of the cultural synods of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Our Saturday evening event was colourful and joyful with much eating and laughter as each Tabacakacaka (parish) performed cultural and contemporary items. Prizes were given for the Most Senior Member, the Best Dressed Lady, A Dedicated Member and many more.

Their presentations centred around the unique lives of three women whom Wasewase initially identified - Queen Esther, Ruth and Rahab - and how those women's lives were reflected in the presenters' personal journeys.

We were blessed to be visited by NZMWF President Lesieli Pope and members of the Executive. We also welcomed Dr Leone Vadei, our Fijian physician who was present and available to attend to medical matters as required. Our women have returned to their homes, taking some thought-provoking stories and messages based on women in the Bible. We pray that it is God's will that our women will embrace the challenges that come with their 'take-away thoughts'.

We express our deepest gratitude to the entire team that contributed to make our meeting successful and unforgettable. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. May God's blessings be upon each and everyone of you.



Commonality Between The Trinity and Te Tiriti

Rev Peter Taylor

I have been reading a book. I like reading books but this book is unusual - I bought this book in 1979 and only just finished reading it. The book is *Early Christian Doctrines* by J N D Kelly. It was originally written in 1958 (my edition is from 1977), has over 500 pages and is still available on Amazon.

Much of this book is to do with how the early Christians reached their doctrine about the Trinity, something I have always been fascinated by. As my minister in Invercargill, Tania Shackleton, rightly pointed out on Trinity Sunday, the word Trinity is not found in the Bible. So why did the early church come to understand God in this way? The process reminds me of something happening in our country today.

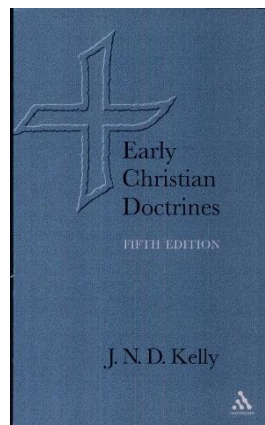
How early Christians reached the doctrine of the Trinity was a long process and confusing to modern minds, using strange Greek words like homoousion, hypostasis and prosopon, and their Latin equivalents. These words do not translate easily (even Latin speakers of the day mistranslated the Greek at times) and over time, early Christians even changed what they meant by them so that one person's orthodox statement in one century became heretical in the next. Debates about the Trinity were drawn out, with opposing groups not listening to each other, deliberately misrepresenting their foes and calling for Synods to resolve issues then making sure only one side was present in the debates and decisions!

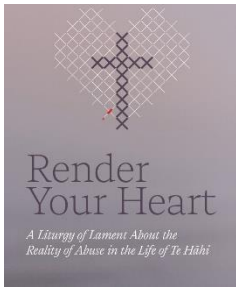
It was surely inappropriate for one party to reinterpret without hearing from the other party. To make true sense today you need to know this history, the meaning of Greek words at the time they were used, and how exactly they applied them. Without this you can easily reach understandings that are quite wrong as many do today. No wonder most of us today say, "I do not really understand the Trinity but I will accept the conclusions early Christians reached."

This reminds me of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and what it meant when it was signed by Māori chiefs. It seems only fair to accept that their understanding (using Te Reo Māori) should take some priority over the English understanding where they differ since Te Tiriti was effectively imposed by the British Crown and it would be Māori who would suffer if it was wrongly applied.

The Treaty Principles Bill, coming to parliament, seems to want to re-interpret the Treaty as being between all New Zealanders and the Government (= the Crown) and not between Māori and the Crown. This would write out Māori from consideration. It is surely inappropriate for one party to reinterpret it without hearing from the other partner.

Hang on a minute, I have just written that - one side imposing views and not listening. Who would have thought that Te Tiriti and The Trinity, as well as looking and sounding similar, would have so much more in common?





Liturgy of Lament for Healing and Compassion

In late June, The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry delivered its final report and recommendations to the Governor-General, Her Excellency The Rt Hon Dame Cindy Kiro. Ahead of the wider release of the report, *Touchstone* shares the genesis of a Lament Liturgy created by Rev David Poultney on behalf of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. *Render Your Heart, A Liturgy of Lament About the Reality of Abuse in the Life of Te Hāhi* will be sent to all parishes, Synods and rohe to encourage reflection and deliberation.

The Royal Commission report called *Whanaketia – through pain and trauma, from darkness to light*, includes almost 2,500 pages of material that explores what happened, why it happened, the context of the abuse, case studies, survivor experiences, and recommendations.

Rev David Poultney, Chair of Faith and Order, suggested a MCNZ liturgy be created at the meeting of Council of Conference earlier this year after the General Secretary talked about the Royal Commission and the involvement of former Methodist Church leaders and people in positions of authority.

David says, "It is clear that the reception of the report will be a consequential and difficult moment for the Church. How we respond matters. We will be confronted by uncomfortable truths about people who have held positions of authority and an abuse of the authority of the Church. The moment needs more than uncomfortable silence or a deliberate amnesia. We need to express our pain, sorrow and institutional guilt in lament. Lament has a long tradition in Jewish and Christian liturgy though the more evangelical traditions - and I include Methodism in this - have perhaps neglected it."

Personal experience of supporting survivors of abuse in parish ministry influenced the choice of readings and content. "In my first parish I supported a survivor of sexual abuse going through a legal process and afterwards we crafted a ritual for survivors of abuse. That informed the lament I prepared for this occasion," David says.

The liturgy includes words from scripture, whakataukī and poetry. It gives voice to the many emotions that accompany the exposure and acknowledgement of abuse and abusers - grief, shock, sorrow, shame and anger - and the betrayal of trust, suffering and damage done to those who have been abused.

"The hope is that all parishes will engage with the liturgy. People in pews and in the pulpits are not to blame but others were sheltered by the authority and dignity of the institutions they served. We need to acknowledge and address that. We tend to be silent with the difficult stuff."

In October 2022 Rev Tara Tautari appeared before the Royal Commission on behalf of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, one of several faith-based organisations called to respond to allegations of historical abuse.

In the May 2024 edition of *Touchstone*, an article by Rev Tara Tautari [Click Here](#) outlined the work being undertaken by MCNZ to provide redress for the survivors' and to prepare safeguarding policies and processes for the future. The Liturgy of Lament is one more initiative in the journey towards healing and remorse.

Render Your Heart, A Liturgy of Lament About the Reality of Abuse in the Life of Te Hāhi translated into Te Reo, Samoan, Tongan and Fijian, will be emailed this week.



Sea of talanoa: A creation story from Tonga

Rev Dr Jione Havea

'Talanoa' is a term that refers to more than just 'story'. The term 'talanoa' also refers to the act of 'telling' stories as well as to the 'conversation' event around stories. The term 'talanoa' refers to three subjects: story, telling, conversation.

It is fair to say that a sea of talanoa ripple across Pasifika – lest i be mistaken, i see Aotearoa as part of Pasifika. We have too many talanoa to tell, and re-Story, and with this article i will begin to share some of our native talanoa.

Because i am a Tongan, i will begin with a Tongan talanoa. But i invite readers to engage with this talanoa as a sacred story. It is one of the sacred stories that give Tongans meaning, and sense of belonging.

'Ata and the first Tongans

This is my maternal grandmother's version of one of the Tongan creation stories:

In the beginning, there were only Moana (sea) and Pulotu (underworld). At the southern edge of Moana, a reef rose up to become the island of 'Ata. One day, a plover bird (kiu, named Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo) came from the sky to visit 'Ata. It dropped a seed onto the island.

The next time Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo visited, it found a creeper that had grown from the seed. It pecked at the root of this creeper, until it split in two.

A few days later Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo returned to find that the root had rotted and a fat, juicy maggot ('uanga) was curled up in it. It pecked the maggot in two. The top section turned into a person named Kohai – who was female. The bottom section turned into another person named Koau – who was male.

Then Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo felt a crumb (momo) on its beak; it shook the crumb off, and it turned into a third person named Momo – my grandmother said that she did not remember their gender.

Kohai, Koau, and Momo were the first humans on 'Ata. Maui brought partners for them from Pulotu and they became the ancestors of the native peoples of Tonga.

Questions

This is not such a strange talanoa. We know that fire comes up from the deep to form islands, and our islands sit on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire.

We know that animals inhabit islands before humans do, and we know that Maui used to travel back and forth between the world of the living and the realm of the ancestors – to bring fire, and in this talanoa, to bring partners so that the native peoples of Tonga come to being.

We also know that with every talanoa, the details are inspiring. With this particular talanoa, the details raise questions that tease our inquiring minds:

1. How did Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo carry the seed to 'Ata?
2. Who are the ancestors of the Tongans?
3. Do we count the 'uanga and kiu among our ancestors?
4. What was the gender of Momo?

There are other questions, but this sacred story also invites other forms of engagement.



Moana world/views

In several essays that i recently published, i used this sacred story to identify four bodies in the Moana worlds – sea (Moana), (is)land ('Ata), sky (from where Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo came), and Pulotu (underworld, from where Maui brought partners for Kohai, Koau, and Momo).

Based on this sacred story, i have suggested that 'Moana world/views' involve finding, and interweaving, these four bodies in texts and teachings. I use 'Moana world/views' to indicate that worldviews are linked to worlds.

Seeing and recognizing these four Moana bodies help one see their presence in other sacred texts as well. For example, they are present and inferred in the opening verses of the first creation story in the Bible:

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. (Gen 1:1–2 NRSVue, my italics)

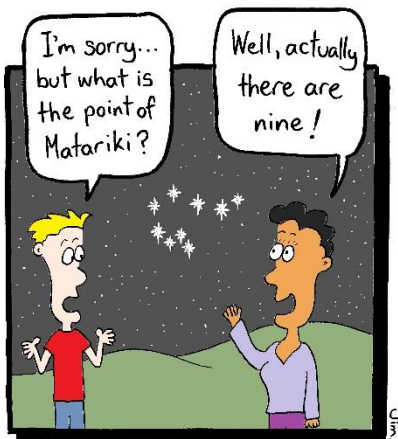
The four Moana bodies are present in this sacred story as well: sky is inferred in (the unfortunate choice of word) 'heavens'; (is)land is named 'earth'; sea is present in 'the waters' (which was divided on Day Two into two bodies – water above, and water below, the sky); and the underworld is imagined in 'the deep'.

The Moana bodies also invite one to read the biblical story critically. For instance, the biblical story locates 'wind' with God, but Moana world/views locate wind with sea and sky. Wind is generated in the sea and comes across the sky.

The Māori talanoa of Tāwhirimātea, the God of clouds and storms, locates wind in the (is)land as well. Tāwhirimātea is the child of Papatūānuku (earth, land) and Ranginui (sky). In locating wind in three Moana bodies – sea, sky, (is)land – the Moana world/views problematize the location of wind with God in the biblical story.

Moreover, attention to the four Moana bodies also invites reconsideration of how we deal with some of the modern challenges that we face. With respect to climate change, for instance, most debates focus on (is)land and sea but tend to ignore sky and underworld. Even the attention to (is)land and sea tends to be anthropocentric.

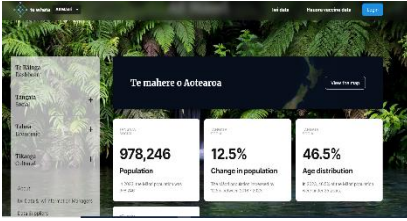
In Moana worlds, on the other hand, the rising of the sea and the warming of the (is)land have a lot to do with the energies in the sky and the movements in the underworld, where a sea of fire flow under the sea and (is)land. The four Moana bodies thus urge us to think beyond our anthropocentric biases.



Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

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



O Purapura Pai

Rev Keita Hotere

E te Atua kuia ruia nei

O purapura pai

Hōmai e koe he ngākau hou

Kia tupu ake ai

Adapting to new situations in any organisation requires an open and willing attitude. When we are open to change, God will bring out the best from our efforts, leading to growth and abundance. At a recent Te Taha Māori workshop—a Treasurers’ training convened in Hawera—I was reminded of the importance of adapting to change. Te Taha Māori office personnel have been diligently visiting our rohe with the mission to strengthen and prepare those of our members charged with financial responsibilities. The workshop brought to light the necessity for our parishes and rohe to engage with technology in line with a rapidly changing world. Understanding the benefits of embracing technology to streamline our operations is a win scenario for all.

The workshop laid bare the expectation set by our church to be transparent in all that we do. We strive to be a paperless society conscious of our church’s own carbon footprint and work towards being more efficient in our accountability to one another. Our Hui Poari needs, our rohe needs influence the way we allocate our people, resources and time. Being able to leverage our resources is a luxury for most parts of our church. Being able to deliver to our people and being able to provide choices available to them is often broadest for financially wealthier parts of our church. How do we leverage this with less financially independent parts of our church? We often underestimate the power of our human resources; shouldn’t our funding priorities build leadership capacity?

Churches, as cornerstones of faith-based organisations, assume a critical role in strengthening communities and addressing community needs and wellbeing. The latest coalition budget highlights the needs are plentiful and ever-present. Good news for some but not for others. It illustrates the ample opportunities that the privileged in our society can access.

Te Kāhui Raraunga Charitable Trusts’ data platform Te Whata reports our 2023 Census statistics show the Māori population was 978,246 an increase of 12.5 percent from the 2018 results. 46 percent of our Māori population are under the age of 25. Couple these facts with the statement 1 in 5 New Zealanders is of Māori descent, it’s likely to be higher. From a population base perspective, 20 percent of the budget should have been delivered to meet Māori needs. This is a social justice issue. The reality is that with such a significant proportion of the population being of Māori descent, and largely young Māori, surely movement towards addressing more of their needs would have been a more just response?

The recent anti-government budget protest action across the country showed the strong level of Māori discontent with recent government policy decisions. It suggests Māori lack of trust and faith in the current coalition government being able to deliver for Māori. In the context of an economy informed by demographic data, the interpretation and application of data metrics plays a pivotal role in future decision-making processes. Māori have a history of being distrustful of government data collection, which may lead to concerns about the completeness of census records. Who gets what, and how much is always a contentious issue come budget day.

Removal of the Māori wards, the government’s most recent policy decision, validates Māori concerns of institutional racism and inequitable outcomes for Māori. The implications of a budget that does little to improve the lives of Māori fuels the grounds for further Māori protest.

Data sovereignty is good news for Māori. It raises issues of equitable outcomes for Māori whilst calling to account our government’s discernment processes. While data collection is a tool for understanding societal trends, it cannot capture the full spectrum of community expressions. The intangible moment of grace reflected in our worship, the collaborating of shared aspirations to improve the lives of all; these cannot be measured, but their impact can be seen and felt by our people in these spaces. As one very wise kaumātua once said, “Let us be the change we want to see.”



Te Whānau Weteriana o Taranaki – Taranaki Methodists Together

In February this year, Rev Michael Lemanu was stationed to the Lower North Island Synod, as Regional Ministry Enabler. Six months on, he reports on the newly established position and his approach to mission in small town Aotearoa.

Greetings from the beauty of Taranaki. It is an honour to provide an update on some of the work that I have been involved with over the past few months.

The Lower North Island Synod covers a massive geographical area and possesses rich and vibrant expressions of Methodism and the church in several different contexts. The church in recent times, has not always equipped our parishes and regions to be the best expressions of ministry that reflects their context and their story. In the Lower North Island, a strong strategic focus is centred around the theme; So what's the story?

In Taranaki, we have a unique story to tell. My appointment, which works across nine different parishes, three different Synods and multiple ecumenical partnerships, is an attempt to model a new way of thinking and doing ministry in places where the 'traditional' model of ministry is no longer feasible or fitting for the needs of our people.

My role is centred on innovation and creativity, the empowerment of local leaders and the desire to work collaboratively in a way that transcends some of the imaginary boundaries that we have at times created for ourselves in the church.

In order to be creative or try different things, some unchanging values must lay the groundwork. It has been a blessing to spend intentional time building relationships (whakawhanaungatanga) and learning about the different communities of faith that are situated around our maunga. When I say around our maunga, I mean literally as a full drive around Mt Taranaki will see you come across our parishes and church communities!

Collaborating and Building Relationships

As my Superintendent, Rev Nicola Teague Grundy, reiterated to me on my face-to-face visit before making the move, there is indeed life in the church beyond the big cities. In my previous work I knew this to an extent, but to now be living and working such a context, I definitely believe this to be the case. In Taranaki, where Weteriana has a long an interwoven story with the people here, it is crucially important that we find ways to actively engage with the world around us.

We had our first combined regional gathering in mid-June, focused on Matariki, and have worked collaboratively to create a plan that looks at expanding our ministry team and being successful at stationing this year.

As we continue to build relationality, be bold and be connexional in our approach, we are excited to see what this new expression of ministry might look like for our region in the coming years. We hope that our work – including mistakes and successes – helps to suggest to the Connexion that there are other models of ministry that can be explored that still hold true to who we are as Weteriana and what our story entails.

This chapter of our story in Taranaki is still new and unfolding! We invite the rest of the Hāhi to uphold us in prayer and ask any questions as we continue to look to work together, as streams of living water that flow of the mountain that is God. Grace and Peace!



Refill your own cup first

Ka pō, ka ao, ka awatea.

From within the darkness comes light and a new day.

This is about moving from illness to wellness, or about new beginnings.

Nā Trudy Downes

Have you heard the saying “you can’t pour from an empty cup”? Or queried the concept of a cup half empty? What about the concept that the size of your cup changes when you aren’t looking and is subject to change without prior notice? Sometimes your cup is so big it takes weeks to fill, and other times it is so small that it dries up in a few days. Have you thought about the fact that your cup is not the same as someone else’s cup? I used to joke that if my cup was half empty that it wasn’t my cup at all, someone must have taken my cup and I will go and find a full cup from somewhere else. Life just doesn’t work that way.

In May I left the office for a long King’s Birthday weekend and I have only just made it back to my workplace in time for the Matariki long weekend. Many thanks to Covid-19 for this unexpected absence. This bout of Covid-19 was short. Just a couple of days feeling like I had a mild cold, but then it took a lot longer to clear my lungs and regain my voice. I was ready to return to the office last week and therefore went out in the weekend prior to my return. Turns out I wasn’t ready because ten minutes of breathing in cold air ran my cup empty for two days and it took another two days for my voice to return to normal. I have to look after my cup and stop, or defer the activities that put holes in it and drains it quicker than it ought. Everyone needs to look after their cup.

This is particularly important in winter; flu season, Covid-19 and the winter blues are all common. Winter brings decreased sunshine; our main source of vitamin D which helps with our moods and sleep regulation. Winter blues can increase our struggles with anxiety, depression and loneliness, and once we start mentally struggling then it can start affecting our ability to physically bounce back from illnesses which in of themselves affect our mental wellness. It can be a cycle; winter can make you feel unwell in more ways than one!

Have self-compassion with what you are feeling. In the life of the Church we are all wanting to help and serve others but sometimes we have to allow ourselves to stand back, take a breath and give ourselves time and space to bounce back. You can’t help fill someone else’s cup if your cup is empty or springing leaks.



Celebrating Abilities and Disabilities

Viv Whimster

“Take my gifts” could well have been the theme at Wesley, Western Bay of Plenty Parish as we observed Disability Awareness Sunday on 16 June. Using Rosalie Sugrue’s liturgy, we heard the stories of some special people.

We listened to the story of a brave local boy, Harry, who has spent many months at Starship with breathing difficulties. His amazing parents Natasha and Ben, brother and assistance dog support him so he can get out and about - climb local Mauao, go kayaking and lead as normal a life as possible. He doesn’t go anywhere without a portable ventilator, but thanks to care and medical intervention, his rare respiratory condition can be managed and his risk of breathing difficulty reduced.

Margaret’s passion is singing, so when she had a stroke 20 years ago, she was devastated and wondered what the future held without a voice or movement. Through a programme of rehabilitation, support from whānau and health professionals and her own determination, she regained the use of her left side and found her voice again through singing. You can read her inspiring story [here](#). We are always pleased to see Margaret at Wesley; when she arrives with her little dog on her mobility scooter, we know we will hear her lovely voice as we sing together.

For our candle-lighter Jen, it was her last Sunday with us before shifting house. Over morning tea she thanked us for our support during her nine months among us. The children present decorated cards for Jen, Harry and Margaret. We reflected that we all have abilities as well as disabilities and in our closing hymn, asked God, in Shirley Murray’s words, to “Take our gifts”



Thinking Out Loud

Rev Andrew Doubleday

I've just been with a Co-operating Venture (CV) Parish that has melted down. I spent three days sitting with individuals and small groups, listening to their stories, reflecting, and praying with them.

This is not atypical. It represents a cohort of CVs that have little understanding of, or subsequent commitment to, the partner churches - Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian - that host them. Over a period of time they've become increasingly congregational, a community church, reflecting the Christian makeup of the small community in which they find themselves. There are vestiges of their denominational heritages present, but they are small, aged, and take no part in leadership.

At the other extreme I'm aware of a CV that was formed the same year (nearly 45 years ago), where everyone knows who the Methodists, Presbyterians, or Brethren are. I'm not sure if this is any healthier.

I've been struck by the 'Acts of the Apostles' narrative of the early church - the first seven years find it exclusively Jewish. Even though they have Jesus' 'Great Commission', and have experienced the pure flush of that amazing Holy Spirit outflow on that day of Pentecost, it has not occurred to anyone that God/Jesus actually intended that they reach out to Gentiles - the rest of us.

Peter's encounter with God on the rooftop in Joppa, as we find it in Acts 10, was a truly shocking experience for him. It shook him to the core. While the Christian church had rapidly expanded following the persecution resulting from the trial and martyrdom of Stephen, these early Jewish Christians had gone to Jewish communities along the trade routes and settled in to the synagogues, their marae, as they were still culturally and by practice, Jewish. It's here they got to talk about Jesus as the long-promised Messiah, and the church grew.

Peter's visit to the Gentile Roman Officer Cornelius at Caesarea, caused a furore in the church. Many believed that the new Gentile converts should be required to follow the Jewish law. All of it. The Jerusalem Council met, Jewish Christians, to decide the Gentile question. Where they landed was even more shocking (to my mind) than all that lead up to this point. They issue an edict. It went like this: Ac 15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements - 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

That's it. Four things. Cast more as a good suggestion than a commandment. Today we may even dispense with three of them. They were not even presented with a Statement of Faith - things they had to commit to believing to determine their orthodoxy.

Which brings me back to CVs. These are our 'Gentile Churches'. We are now in the middle of the third decade of the 21st century. Most of the polity of the partner churches dates back to the 18th century and for some, much further back. Perhaps it is time we had a fresh look at what it is we require of our CVs, and as we do, will have an opportunity to see what it is we require of ourselves.

Kings Birthday weekend next year will be an opportunity to discuss these matters. I'm actively engaged in recruiting Regional Leaders of the Partner Churches - Bishops, Presbytery EOs and Moderators, and Methodist Synod Superintendents - to be part of the conversation. It will be in Auckland. The theme? 'Our Future Together'. This could be a defining moment in our life and history.



A Bespoke Kete Rich in Resources

Mark Gibson, Acting Chair, Climate Justice Working Group

The Season of Creation 2024 for Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa will be resourced with a kete of liturgical and devotional resources.

Earlier in the year I was invited to create such a resource with the aim of providing something contextual that could bring alive the season in Aotearoa. This brief included developing resources that relate to our Decade on Climate Justice, with the theme Rekindle the Vā of Papatūānuku; and our current two-year focus of Para Kore/Zero Waste.

In 2024 the Season of Creation spans the month of September, and covers five Sundays. The theme chosen for the season, and which flows through the resources is "In Full Connection". It is a new take on a recognisable Methodist term. Hopefully it will stretch our understanding of what being in "full connection" might mean through the lens of creation.

A strong emphasis of the material is fostering a lively, earth-engaged spirituality and faith. The hope is that it will deepen our relationship with the natural world as well as God and each other.

Though written in English, with some inclusion of Te Reo Māori, parts of the resource are likely to be translated into other languages used in the life of Te Hāhi Weteriana.

The resource will honour the three-year cycle used internationally for the season, as well as the designated lectionary readings. But on the 5th Sunday (September 29) it honours Green Sunday, established for Te Hāhi, a few years ago.

So this year it is:

September 1 – Feast of Creation/Planet Earth Sunday
 8 – Humanity Sunday
 15 – Sky Sunday
 22 – Mountain Sunday
 29 – Green Sunday

Within the kete of resources will be liturgical material for corporate worship settings. This will include suggestions for symbolism, images, calls to worship, written prayers, hymn suggestions (all Aotearoa written), blessings, readings, and guiding leads for preachers and reflectors, and a few spiritual development activity ideas for faith communities to engage around. There will also be resources for personal devotional.

Throughout the material are numerous references to the amazing indigenous flora and fauna of our motu.

As well as being the Season of Creation the month of September is a rich time of the year for worship and contemplation. In our Aotearoa context it dovetails with the season of spring. I think this is one of the strongest reasons why we need our own contextual resources. Northern hemisphere resources readily available online deprive us of the opportunity to connect with what's happening in the natural world where we live.

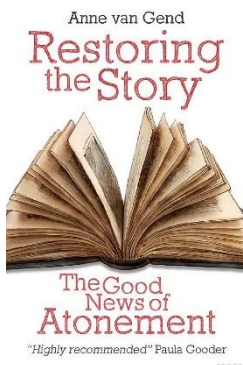
In September we also move to Daylight Saving, a full moon happens during Sky Sunday week, there is Conservation Week, Te Wiki o te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week) and Mental Health Awareness Week. The kete attempts to thread in elements of all of these events.

To complement and add depth to the written content, Greg Hughson from Dunedin, has generously agreed to provide photographs for the resource. He has a passion and gift for nature photography and his offering will add greatly to the project.

Resources will be available online on the Cconnexional website and in printed form in the latter half of August. I hope this gift is enriching for the whole church and deepens our journey through the Decade on Climate Justice.



Restoring the Story:- The Good News of the Atonement



Author: Anne van Gend
Publisher: SCM Press 2024
Reviewer: Rev Dr Jenny Dawson

The beginning to the penultimate chapter of Anne van Gend's book - a quote from CS Lewis' *The Last Battle* - gives a taste for the whole book. "Aslan", said Lucy through her tears. "Could you - will you - do something for these poor Dwarfs?" This leads into Aslan's response, about those who would choose cunning instead of belief. The author invites us to consider again and again that the sheer goodness and beauty of our hope is what Jesus has done, rather than being stuck with a particular way in which we might understand what

Jesus has done. She offers a gift to the church by unpacking four different traditional ways of telling the foundational story of Christ's atonement, surveying them in a scholarly but gentle way.

This book definitely fills a need in the Christian community in the manner with which it deals with the kinds of beliefs that many people have taken on, perhaps through what they sing or have been told, rather than thinking through with care, in a way that makes sense in our contemporary world.

The author is familiar with children's and young adult literature so the book shines with references to the writings of CS Lewis, Tolkien, JK Rowling, Garth Nix, Cassandra Clare and others, as well as careful examination of Scripture. Mystery is at the heart of her thinking. As she says, "Atonement is a good example of a mystery that has suffered from being 'shrunk' into words" so that the love which is so well expressed through stories, poetry, music and art is reduced to a logical, even legal process.

At the centre of it all is the question: What stories are we telling ourselves, living by and telling the world about our faith? The Ven. Dr Anne van Gend is Ministry Educator for the Anglican Diocese of Dunedin, and her response in this book comes out of not only wide reading and scholarship but encounters with ordinary people who long to have something to share with others.



The Sun Entered my Life

Gillian Southey, CWS

Samer, a former Syrian refugee, is a translator in the Netherlands. He credits Christian World Service partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) Lebanon, for his success.

When war broke out in Syria, Samer's family fled to Lebanon. It was a traumatic experience for the eighth-grade student. He soon dropped out of school but after missing more than a year, he decided to give school another try. This time he went to the school at the Sidon Centre run by DSPR Lebanon and he was so impressed by the teachers, he worked hard to catch up on his studies and went on to pass the Baccaalaureate exams, before studying media and communications at a Lebanese university.

"We owe DSPR Lebanon for our renewed hope. When I passed the Baccaalaureate exam, I felt as though the sun had entered into my life," said Samer on a recent visit to his family in Lebanon. Samer speaks for many refugees when he expresses appreciation for DSPR Lebanon and organisations that financially support its work, including CWS.

DSPR Lebanon runs education programmes from preschool to adult literacy classes. Funding has been further stretched because of the downturn in Lebanon's economy in 2019. Executive director Sylvia Haddad is passionate about education and grateful for your support. She says when the first refugees arrived from Syria, DSPR Lebanon established new programmes at their request. Many were double refugees from Palestine and Syria who knew from personal experience, the importance of education.

"To continue our work and service of helping and empowering people to help themselves, we depend on good people like yourselves who help us survive and serve," she says.



Campaign to Stop Free Carbon Credits for High Polluters

Last month the Don't Subsidise Pollution coalition, including CWS presented a petition signed by 6,070 people, calling for an end to free carbon credits for high polluting companies. The campaign wants Aotearoa New Zealand to move more rapidly to becoming a low-carbon economy.

Under the current Emissions Trading Scheme, businesses are required to report on greenhouse gas emissions and surrender one emission unit per tonne of CO² produced. There are a limited number of units available to assist New Zealand meet its international climate obligations.

The government currently allocates free carbon credits to businesses facing overseas competition from places which have no carbon tax in place. The campaign wants free carbon credits removed by 2030, much more quickly than the current 1 percent a year set under legislation.

The technology for significantly reducing greenhouse gas production is already available but requires capital investment. Funding from the current scheme could be reallocated as a loan or in return for equity to assist these industries to decarbonise. The petition also asked for a Carbon Border Mechanism (as in the European Union) to assist affected workers to find 'green jobs' in a low-carbon economy. The five largest emitters including transnational corporations Rio Tinto and Methanex produce 10 percent of the country's emissions, equivalent to around two million petrol-fueled cars. The subsidies total \$600 million annually.

"Together these requests are largely common sense. Removing free carbon credits and putting the money into supporting industries to modify their production methods is a better use of public money. Instead of subsidising pollution, the money would be supporting improvements," said CWS Board member Jonathan Fletcher who represented CWS at the presentation.

In accepting the petition, Labour Climate Spokesperson Megan Woods and Green Party Co-Leader Chlöe Swarbrick supported ending the subsidising of climate pollution. Government MPs were unavailable.



Kia Orana from Rarotonga!

MCNZ Archivist Jennie Hood, is currently living and working in Rarotonga as part of a one-year assignment with Volunteer Service Abroad. Based at the University of the South Pacific, her job is to appraise, catalogue and digitise the archives of Ron and Marjorie Crocombe, both highly respected academics prolific Pacific researchers and academics. She has been warmly welcomed by USP Director Dr Debi Futter-Puati and the staff at USP, Jennie shares news of her work - and life - four months in.

Ron Crocombe was known as the 'Father of Pacific Studies'. He was the founder and first director of the Institute of Pacific Studies at USP. His wife, Marjorie Tuainekore-Crocombe, was an anthropologist and highly respected academic. She was at one time the director of the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. Marjorie assisted Ron with much of his research and although the bulk of the papers I am working on are Ron's, Marjorie's input is reflected in this collection.

In the 1960s, Ron's work on Land Tenure in the Pacific was groundbreaking in its use of vernacular sources to understand and reconstruct the pre-European contact land tenure system in the Cook Islands. The archive contains original source material used in this work which is incredibly important for people of the Cook Islands. The collection also includes a tranche of correspondence with other academics around the world and Ron's indefatigable personality shines through in the lively exchanges recorded in these letters.

Until now, much of the material has been untouched since Ron's death in 2009. The hot and humid conditions here in the Cook Islands have accelerated the deterioration of the records and unfortunately mould and pests have taken hold. When the collection was transferred to USP it was stored in a shipping container and a wooden shed. The shed can get extremely hot and is not entirely weatherproof so it has been quite a challenge to complete the appraisal process! The first couple of months I was working in intense temperatures and it has been demanding work in tough conditions. Despite this, the appraisal process is now complete and I will be moving on to cataloguing and selecting items for digitisation as the next step.

In addition to this work, I am working one day per week at the Ministry of Culture on various projects, mostly assisting at the National Library. My husband Ryan is accompanying me here on assignment. He joins me at the National Library to assist with technology issues (and anything else that needs attention!) and has also been getting involved with environmental projects at Muri Environment Care.

Outside of work we are making the most of the beautiful weather. We go swimming and snorkeling regularly in the lagoon and enjoy trying the delicious local food. I attend local dance classes and we have both had Cook Islands Māori language lessons. We are taking the opportunity to explore the other islands here and recently visited Aitutaki.

VSA do such valuable work across the Pacific and I feel very fortunate to have been selected for this role. It is quite a process to go through – rigorous interviews, medical tests, vaccinations and a lengthy visa process – but to work here, experience the culture and assist in improving access to the archives for staff and researchers alike is life changing. For more information about the great work done by VSA, have a look at their website here.

Meitaki maata!



“Until A Christian Conscience Intervenes”

Sister Kenneth McKenzie 1853 – 1942

Rev Donald Phillipps

The story of this exceptional woman is not as well-known as it might be. This may be due to confusion over dates, for example: her death date in two of the principal sources of information on Methodist deaconesses is incorrect. The ‘In Memoriam’ to her in the New Zealand Herald provides incontrovertible evidence. What is known now is that she was born Elizabeth Smith in Dundee in 1853 and came to New Zealand with her family in 1859. Her father, John Smith, was one of thousands who joined in the Thames gold rush in the late 1860s and was successful enough there for him to become a farmer at Ascot near Mangere.

Elizabeth was 21 when she married Kenneth McKenzie, a coastal shipping captain. He was one of those many victims of the dangers of this occupation; when he was 25 he drowned in the wreck of the Rona on the Manukau bar. At that time Elizabeth was living in Oamaru but she returned to Auckland with her young family of three sons and a daughter, and became involved in Methodist activities, maybe at Mangere. She was a local preacher in Auckland when (1892) that was still somewhat unusual.

When Jane Blakeley, the founding sister of the Helping Hand Mission at Freeman’s Bay, transferred to the China Inland Mission, Sister Kenneth, as she was always known, took over and held that position until 1911 when she moved to the East St Mission in Newton. While there she was formally recognised as a member of the Deaconess Order in this country. In 1913 she moved again to the more central role of deaconess at the Auckland Central Mission and she retired in 1919. Hers was a ministry of exceptional length by contemporary standards and attracted the attention of the Auckland newspapers. Reports on her work and letters she wrote seeking help and understanding regularly appeared in the New Zealand Herald. This paper described the Helping Hand Mission as a “household word in the Province” because it was both rescue work and social reform.

The scope of her work can be summarised from the many published annual reports. Her mission was to families suffering cold and privation and, to put it bluntly, this sort of work challenged someone to “respond with a cheque”. “My work is visiting from home to home in any and all parts of the city. It embraces all sorts and conditions of people – widows, deserted wives, the young and the aged, and many neglected wee bairns.” The Benevolent Fund she administered operated literally from hand to mouth and the £100 and more that she received annually by means of small donations was never enough. One early annual report detailed some aspects of what was expected of her and the Mission: handing out 260 bundles of old clothing, writing 416 letters (it is from one of her letters that the phrase used as the title for this piece originated), making 1825 visits and obtaining situations for numbers of people. She worked long hours, starting before breakfast and going on until late in the evening. Her letters published in the newspapers gave rise to different reactions, not always grateful ones – people did not like to be reminded that slums existed in New Zealand at that time.

Possibly the same could be said of the present time. Drawing the attention of the authorities to shortcomings in their application of services for the people is all too often obscured by disagreement over detail – especially when that ‘detail’ is the life and welfare of an individual lost in the world of statistics. The Christian conscience may need revitalising.