



MCNZ Facing Failure, Making Amends, Implementing Change

The report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, considering the abuse of tamariki, rangatahi and adults in state and faith-based care in Aotearoa New Zealand, will be delivered in June. The release of the report will conclude one more chapter in the biggest and most comprehensive inquiry ever undertaken in this country.

The findings and recommendations may not bring closure to the many people whose lives and futures have been destroyed by the appalling actions of those charged with their care. However, the report may provide assurance that survivors' voices have been heard and in sharing their stories, the hope is that others will be spared being subjected to similar treatment. Those impacted include a number of people in the care of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and its related institutions. **General Secretary, Rev Tara Tautari**, shares the work being undertaken to ensure there is redress for those affected and safeguarding procedures in place to ensure that it never happens again.

On 18 October 2022, I was staying at a hotel near our 409 Church offices in Tamaki. Since early morning, I had been in prayer, uncertain about what the day would bring. This day marked my appearance before the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care. Seated before the Commissioners as I prepared to address the profound injustices within our Church community, my wairua felt heavy within me, although my mind was calm. And so I began what was to be a day-long talanoa with the following words:

"On behalf of the Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, we apologise to every person who has been abused while in the care of the Church and its related institutions. The Church did not have adequate safeguarding policies and processes in place, and this led to unimaginable suffering of some children, young people and vulnerable adults. In some cases, the abusers were employees of Church related institutions; in others, the abusers were Clergy members. In some cases, the abusers were students at our Methodist College. There is no excuse for the abusive behaviour, nor for the harm inflicted on innocent people. Such abuse has no place in our faith, and we apologise unequivocally to all those survivors. We acknowledge that the trauma experienced as a result of abuse has had long-term impacts on the lives of survivors and not only on survivors, but also on their whānau and their loved ones. We apologise unreservedly to all those who have witnessed and lived with the consequences of the trauma experienced by survivors. The Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand commits itself to ensure that safeguarding policies and processes are in place in the Church and its related institutions."

Church Must be a Safe Haven for All

The importance of churches in New Zealand being safe spaces for all people cannot be overstated. As places of worship and community gathering, churches hold a unique responsibility to foster environments where individuals of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences feel welcomed, respected, and protected. Creating safe spaces within churches is not just a moral imperative but also a fundamental aspect of living out the teachings of love, compassion, and justice that lie at the heart of our faith tradition. For survivors of sexual harm, in particular, churches must serve as havens where they can find support, healing, and validation for their experiences, free from judgment or stigma. Moreover, prioritising safety within churches sends a powerful message to the wider community about the values of inclusivity, integrity, and accountability that guide faith communities in New Zealand. It is through this commitment to creating safe spaces that churches can truly fulfil their mission of nurturing spiritual growth, fostering meaningful connections, and embodying the transformative power of faith in action.



Since our appearance before the Royal Commission of Inquiry, our Church has advanced in its safeguarding efforts. Our safeguarding policy, to be presented at this year's Conference, underscores our commitment to a safe environment, guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and our bicultural partnership.

Following a 3-day pilot training workshop in October 2022, four subsequent workshops have been conducted by trained and skilled facilitators Shirley Rivers, Darryn Hickling, and Mary Caygill. Workshops will be augmented by e-learning and webinars, designed to prioritise the safety of children across diverse care environments. Additionally, our ongoing mandate for Professional Supervision continues, while we are in the process of crafting a programme for Spiritual Companionship, which we believe will further enhance our commitment to safeguarding initiatives.

Supporting the Survivors

As General Secretary, I have the responsibility of overseeing our Church's redress scheme, which has brought to light 60 plus survivor claims for redress. These courageous individuals have come forward from various care settings within our Church community, including Children's Homes we operated, Wesley College, and our churches. Their decision to share their stories reflects tremendous bravery and resilience in confronting the painful realities of their past experiences. From my meetings with survivors, it is clear that what they seek most is to be believed and validated in their journey toward healing and justice.

I've met with survivors in maximum security prisons, in lawyers' offices, and in their homes. I've met with survivors as part of restorative justice processes. The discussions were intense and graphic. The Royal Commission's report will include recommendations as a result of the inquiry. The Methodist Church will feature in the report, that is for sure. In the meantime, our own redress scheme continues.

Facing Failure and Embracing Transformation

This is not a comfortable ride - discomfort is often necessary for growth and transformation. Certainly, our Church needs to be transformed. To break the code of silence and confront the painful truths that have been buried beneath the surface for far too long. To face our failure, and to commit wholeheartedly to making amends and ensuring such abuses never occur again.

The journey ahead will demand honesty, humility, and a willingness to listen to those whose voices have been silenced or ignored or not believed and to act upon their truths with compassion and justice. It will require us to dismantle systems of power that have perpetuated harm and to rebuild with accountability and transparency at the forefront. This journey is not for the faint of heart, but it is essential, if we are to truly embody the values of love, compassion, and integrity that our faith teaches. So, as we embark on this journey together, let us brace ourselves for the discomfort, knowing that on the other side lies the possibility of a Church renewed, restored, and strengthened in its commitment to healing and justice for all.

Like each of you, I am deeply invested in ensuring that our Church becomes a safe space for all, where every individual feels welcomed, valued, and protected. May God continue to accompany us and our Hāhi on this journey.

Na reira, e te whānau, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā anō tatou katoa.



Seeking Hope in God

Rev Peter Taylor

Mr Micawber, a character in Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield*, when faced with great problems declares that "something will turn up". But it never seems to, and he lurches from one crisis to another.

When most people talk about hope they might cross their fingers, take a lucky mascot in hand or around their necks, while trying to ignore the problems they are facing. This approach might keep them going in tough times, but it is not Christian hope; it is merely the power of positive thinking, or false optimism with a cheery face. To an observer, there may be little difference between the two, but on the inside, they are very different.

So often hope expressed in church circles seems like Mr Micawber's "something will turn up". Do you know a congregation that is forever hoping for a young family to turn up and begin the growth of the church? Or have you come across a parish council struggling financially, hoping for a large donation to turn up? Or the prayer meeting that hopes a cancer cure will turn up for their beloved friend through the power of prayer?

I am not saying that no young family will ever come, nor that donations are never given, nor that prayer is futile. What I am saying is that if our hope is placed in "something will turn up", whether wishful thinking, a generous donor, or even prayer, then that hope is misplaced. The current presidential theme is God, Our Source of Hope (Romans 15:13). We put our hope in God, and God alone, not in any human being or institution or activity, or even "something turning up".

Paul writes: "We know that suffering produces patience; patience produces character; and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4). The surest way to hope is therefore through suffering, which sounds crazy but is true in the experience of many. This is not to say that we should seek suffering – we get enough without seeking more! What matters is how we deal with that suffering and what we learn about ourselves through it.

Hope comes not through bypassing or ignoring suffering, like Mr Micawber, but by honestly acknowledging it and the pain or anger it causes, and sharing that pain and anger with the God who loves us. Hope comes not when we brush our mistakes to one side, as we often do in church circles, but by admitting those mistakes, perceiving the harm they have done, seeking forgiveness where appropriate and doing all this before God.

This is one message of Easter. On the cross Jesus did not shy away from his suffering, nor the abandonment he experienced from his friends and even God; his death was real enough but it was not the end. Christ was raised! And he was raised not just for his benefit, but for ours too; his new life is a foretaste of that new life God offers to each of us.

Share with God your suffering, as a church or individual, discover patience as you wait, for all this will begin a transformation of character that leads to a worthwhile hope, in God, Our Source of Hope. Oh, and don't be a Mr Micawber!



Touchstone Survey Results In

Ady Shannon

We thank the individuals, organisations and parishes who responded to our recent survey to help us gauge what is relevant, read and required by our readers. We received 110 responses representative of approximately 600 readers. Although there was some desire for a return to a printed publication, the feedback was mostly positive regarding the content, accessibility and style of our communications.

Feedback Summarised

1. Mostly favourable / positive comments from those who responded, alluding to the enjoyment of catching up with what is happening in the Connexion and the importance of the role that *Touchstone* has in sharing news and information for a Connexional Church.
2. Most have accepted the online version - some lamented the loss of the printed version particularly those responding on behalf of older congregations.
3. There is a lack of understanding and confusion regarding the availability and purpose of the PDF version of each monthly edition.
4. Many appreciate the PDF - some respondents did not realise it was available.
5. Most are happy with the content - there were one or two who missed Ian Harris
6. We are not doing well in engaging Pasifika parishes / congregations.
7. Content could benefit from having a focus on articles relevant to uniting and cooperating parishes, especially given the absence of Presbyterian publications.
8. Content that appealed included Our People, Looking Back, Reviews, Kidz Korna

The Takeouts

We are a diverse church and accordingly our people include those with diverse opinions, ethnicities, cultural mores, attitudes, ages and preferences, all with a shared faith and commitment to living a faith-filled life and ministry. Finding a means of communicating relevant and interesting news and content – including articles that give pause for reflection and thought - for all, is a challenge. That challenge is compounded by the ever-increasing range of online forums and content delivery options that appeal to the diversity of our readers and budgets limitations.

Although there is a desire for a return to a printed paper, this will not be possible due to the escalating costs of printing and publication, combined with our commitment to climate-friendly initiatives. Generally, the format and content of the online monthly dispatch, including articles with a stronger focus on theological and social justice issues, is favoured and will continue.

There seems to be some misunderstanding of the role of this PDF attachment that goes out with the link to the online version of *Touchstone*. This edited and reduced version of the original content is intended as an option for parish secretaries or others to print and share news with those people who do not have access to, the desire or the ability to read content online. The PDF is deliberately reduced so that printing does not exceed 20 A4 pages.

The Publishing Board recognises that change is imperative to continue to share the voice of the Methodist Church in New Zealand in ways that are relevant and accessible. Be assured we will respond to feedback, and that although all voices are heard, consensus decision-making means that the desire of the majority will determine how, and where, those changes unfold.



Waitoki Church Celebrates Centenary

Rev Andrew Gammon

The Methodist Church in Waitoki held its first service on Sunday 27 April 1924. The community's church and school had been transported from Horseshoe Bush to its new site by horse and wagon. To mark the centenary, the parish held two major events on the weekend 13 – 14 April. At a centennial dinner on Saturday evening, members of the parish past and present gathered to share anecdotes, memories and cake.

The following day past minister Rev Val Nicholls addressed a capacity crowd at the Centennial Church Service.

In the late 19th century the area just north of Auckland was a great source of kauri gum. As a result, several settlements developed in which the gum diggers established little community buildings which were used as both school and church. By WWI most of the gum supplies in the area had been exhausted and the Horseshoe Bush district near to Waitoki was largely deserted. However, 20 families settled in the Waitoki area where the relationship between the settlers and the local iwi, Ngati Whatua, was one of mutual respect and co-operation. It was decided to move the closed church/school building from Horseshoe Bush to Waitoki. The relocated building opened its doors to school children on 22 April 1924. The inaugural church service held in the building the following Sunday was officiated by Rev William Bayliss.

One hundred years on, the Waitoki area is largely populated by life-stylers, many of whom commute into Auckland. The congregation quickly outgrew the little school room and met for years in the community hall before getting their own worship building. This, in turn, was replaced by the present Keith Hay building which was placed on the site in 1975. The old pews are long gone and the parish currently has an informal worship style meeting curated to suit worshippers of all ages, gathered around tables.

Among those in attendance at the weekend celebrations were previous ministers, Revs Pat Jacobson (1992-97), Jacqui Cavit (2003-07) and Val Nicholls (2009-11). Rev Barry Jones entertained us with the story of his father Alan Jones, who as a Home Missionary (1937-40) visited Waitoki and the other churches in the Kaukapakapa-Silverdale Circuit on his motorbike. At a near full church on Sunday morning there was a display of the church's history. A highlight of the weekend was the address by Rev Val Nicholls in which she told of the past and pointed us toward the future, encouraging us to learn from the past, to live for today and to hope for the future.



Touchstone Contact Details

I welcome feedback on content included in Touchstone.

Ngā mihi nui

Ady Shannon, Editor Touchstone

Email: adys@methodist.org.nz

Phone: 021 209 9702



Kōrero Mai: Earth, Our Parish

Te Aroha Rountree and George Zachariah

Trinity Methodist Theological College is a community of students and researchers producing and disseminating contextually relevant and transformative knowledge. The College seeks to go beyond the conventional roles of a theological institution, therefore we have decided to bring out our own publications and congregational resources to disseminate theological reflections to the larger public, including academia and the church.



Our theological praxis and inquiries are informed by Moana and Māori epistemologies and lived experiences that contest and unsettle dominant theological doctrines and ways of doing theology. Our decolonial alternative theological reimaginations are reflected in our academic programmes and courses.

Our first book, *Theology as Threshold: Invitations from Aotearoa New Zealand* was released at the 2022 Conference of Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa Methodist Church of New Zealand. As faculty, each of us works within our own research fields and where possible we collaborate with other theologians and biblical scholars to both inform and guide our work with the college and the church.

As well as publishing our work internationally, we also gather people by hosting annual conferences including Talanoa and OBSA. This year we are organising two conferences. The first one will be our Wesley Symposium from 24 - 25 May, focusing on the future of Methodist theological education in Aotearoa and Oceania. The second conference will be held 27 - 28 September and explores the implications of Artificial Intelligence on theological education. The College will aim to develop the papers from both conferences for publication.

As the tertiary theological education provider of Te Hāhi, we have decided to publish a series of congregational resources to support the work of the church. Kōrero Mai is the name that we have given to this series. The first book in this series is entitled *Earth, Our Parish*. As we observe the climate justice decade, this is our contribution to the church to facilitate deeper reflections and engagements.

It took us more than two years to complete this project. There are eleven short chapters written by the teaching staff of the College on various topics related to climate justice from Moana and Māori perspectives. Tara Tautari, our General Secretary, wrote the foreword, and Dr Michael Mawson from the University of Auckland wrote the afterword. We express our sincere gratitude to Gillian Laird for the beautiful and meaningful artwork on the cover page of this publication and our first publication, *Theology as Threshold*.

We are currently working on the second book in the Kōrero Mai series. This book will focus on Te Hāhi and Te Tiriti. We are developing our approach with some potential chapters on reStorying or reSigning Te Tiriti, Climate – Whenua and Wai, Migration and Migrant Communities, Liturgy and Worship, Education and Culture. We hope to launch this second book in the series during the National Conference in Wellington later this year.



Enriching the Lives of Youth and Enriching Church by Their Contributions

Simulata Pope

Since joining the Te Hāpai Transition Team, I've been prompted to reflect on my experiences as a young Methodist. The tasks facing the Transition Team are varied, and one that excites me is the opportunity to deepen our understanding of youth ministry in today's church context.

Recently, I discovered an online article about John Wesley's work and his commitment to young people within the Connexion. He talked a lot around regularly meeting with young people and encouraged church leaders to converse with young people in their church.

Much like this thinking, our current efforts at Te Hāpai cover a broad range of activities as we consider exciting new ways of working with our young people and looking at youth ministry. These discussions will explore how the church can better support young people, guided by insights from youth and our champions of youth ministry. Te Hapai is committed to working alongside rangatahi (youth) and understanding youth ministry is a key part of our task ahead. We will share how our mahi has progressed in our report to Conference later this year.

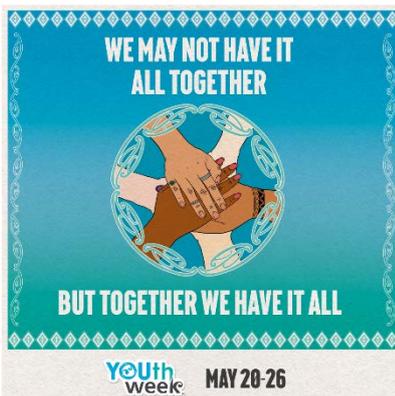
An Ongoing Journey

Understanding and addressing the challenges that young people face within our church is not a new endeavour. It has been a long-standing conversation and one I have engaged with at many national Conferences. It is, however, an ongoing journey to find effective ways to support and engage our youth through ministry. Inspired by John Wesley's historical commitment, we continue to prioritise the voices, participation and spiritual growth of our children, youth and families.

As we approach Youth Week 2024 in Aotearoa (May 20-26), this year's theme is: '**We may not have it all together, but together we have it all, Māwherangi a tama roto ka taka, kāpuia ake ka pūrangiaho**'. I encourage you to take the time to talk to a young person: a relative, someone at church, work or someone on the street. It is a perfect time to reflect on how we can further support our young people of diverse backgrounds, skills and perspectives both inside our youth ministries and in our everyday lives. Our goal is to ensure that our church enriches youth lives and is enriched by their contributions.

The Transition Team is eager to hear your feedback and answer any questions. We realise this task is complex and cannot be accomplished alone. We are also discussing different ways to get as much information out to you as possible. For any inquiries or thoughts, please reach out to us at ttg@methodist.org.nz

Let us always celebrate and give thanks for our children. Praise God for our children!





A Legacy of Love Guided by Faith

Rosalina Toilolo

In the realm of faith, there are individuals who leave a deep-rooted mark on the hearts and minds of those they serve. On the weekend of 6-7 Jan 2024 Panmure Methodist gathered to pay tribute to a remarkable couple, our beloved Rev Fatuatia and his wife Suresa

Tufuga, who dedicated 28 years of their lives to serve Te Hahi Weteriana o Aotearoa and the last six years to our Panmure Methodist Church.

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight."

This article reflecting on the legacy of Rev Fatu - highlighting his exceptional faith, leadership, unwavering love for people from all walks of life and his dedication to nurturing the youth as leaders of tomorrow - was originally intended to be published in the February edition of *Touchstone*. Unforeseen circumstances disrupted our plans when Rev Fatu experienced an unexpected heart attack, leading us to prioritise his health and respond to his family's privacy by postponing the publication.

Now, with hearts full of gratitude and awe, we joyfully declare that Rev Fatu has been miraculously healed. After three challenging months in hospital, he emerged victorious, a testament to God's loving intervention and the power of collective prayer from his family and Sinoti Samoa. Rev Fatu not only lives to witness and read about the profound impact he made during his ministry, he continues to carry out God's work, even in retirement.

Rev Fatuatia and Suresa faithfully shepherded our congregation, providing spiritual guidance, comfort and support. Their compassion, wisdom and genuine love for all members of church have touched countless lives. They both encouraged us to deepen our relationship with God to seek understanding through scripture and Suresa's favourite prayer!

Throughout their time in Panmure they welcomed individuals from all walks of life. Their teachings emphasised the importance of love, acceptance and understanding, reminding us that we are all children of God.

One of *Rev Fatuatia's* hallmarks is his immense pride in his Panmure youth group. He cherished and nurtured their growth, achievements and potential, and encouraged all youth to become leaders of tomorrow which led him into building Sinoti Samoa's first mission choir, for which he will be forever remembered.

We express our gratitude for Fatuatia and Suresa's sermons, prayers, counselling and pastoral care, and we will continue to remember them by carrying forward their passion for spiritual growth. We will ensure that our church remains a place of open arms and filled with love. We pray their retirement will be a time of well-deserved rest and joy, knowing they have left an engrained mark on Panmure.

Ia manuia le lua malologa Tama ma Tina malolo manumalo!





Celebrating our Rangatahi Youth Week 2024

Anaseini Nuku

Youth Week is celebrated in Aotearoa New Zealand from 20 - 26 May 2024. This year's theme for Youth Week is "We may not have it all together, but together we have it all" - 'Māwherangi a tama roto ka taka, kāpuia ake ka pūrangiaho'.

Youth Week is an opportunity to celebrate young people's valuable contributions to their communities and aspire for Aotearoa to be a country where young people are vibrant, optimistic, supported, and encouraged to take up

challenges. The week also recognises the youth workers, youth service providers, and others working with and for our young people.

I want to start by acknowledging and thanking all who serve our young people within the church; church leaders who champion our young people, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers and all those rangatahi who sit on working groups and boards ensuring that the voices of our young people are heard.

The theme is a timely reminder that even though we may face challenges and struggles as individuals or even as a collective, when we come together and support each other, we have the power to achieve great things. It recognises the strength and value of unity, collaboration, and community.

Youth Shaping the Direction of MCNZ

Earlier this year, the Taiwi Youth Ministry team (TYTANZ) met with Simulata Pope and Alofa So'olefai, who are members of the transition team, to discuss the current state of the work towards the establishment of Te Hāpai. This was an opportunity for us to more deeply understand the role that young people will play in this process and how this work will shape the future of what ministry to young people looks like for all of Te Haahi. It was clear from this conversation that all team members recognised the importance of this work and the need for young people to feed into the direction that this work lands in.

The question was posed - what are the things that are preventing growth for young people in our church? Although many challenges were identified, particularly in a post-COVID environment, there was also an acknowledgment of the opportunity that this work presents for us to reimagine how we are creating a space that enables our young people to grow and thrive in their faith and in the church. The needs of our young people and leaders are vast. There isn't one answer or solution that will work for everyone. From the different age cohorts to the different regions and synods represented, our experiences differ. This emphasised for us the importance of further engagement and collaboration with our young people to understand their vision for the church, their specific needs, and how this can be best achieved through the work being led by the transition team.

With the transition team's final report due at the end of the year, we look forward to being able to feed into this work to ensure our young people's voices are heard and incorporated into the decisions and direction that our church moves in.



He Whakaaroaro

Rev Keita Hotere

Inoi Mo Te Hunga Iti Rawa

I recently had the privilege of attending the Karakia, a blessing ceremony for the opening of a renewed papakāinga. The first three homes of this papakāinga development built on Māori land, were completed and the early morning blessing began. I offer this Inoi mō te Hunga Iti Rawa (vulnerable communities) inspired by this whānau returning to live in community on their ancestral land. It was a moving experience.

*Mātāpuna o te Tūmanako,
Source of hope,
Kia areare mātou ki tōu Reo.
We turn to your Voice.
E karanga atu nei.
Calling out to us.
Kia āta noho ki a mātou i ngā wā katoa, i ngā mahi katoa.
Be with us in every moment, in every action.
Kia mātau kia mārama ko tēnei aronga nui.
With greater awareness and direction.
Whakamānawa te hunga iti rawa.
May we strive to uplift and regenerate vulnerable communities.
Waihoki kua tau!
So be it!*

We gathered before the break of dawn, listening for the first chorus of birds welcoming in the new day. In that moment, devoid of distractions from modern technology, we connected briefly with the natural world around us. "Korihi ngā manu – the morning chorus of the birds." These words hold profound significance in our rituals. In this continuum of darkness into light our incantations complement the natural world. These words are not just poetic expressions but are a concrete reminder of our roles and responsibilities in the taiao (environment) as kaitiaki (guardians/protectors of the taiao).

As we contemplate the challenges facing our vulnerable communities in Aotearoa, it's crucial in our roles to amplify voices that go unheard. Who is advocating or signalling the change for te hunga iti rawa our vulnerable communities who are most affected by societal, economic, political shifts? How do we ensure that every individual or community is treated with dignity and respect? In this time of recession, it's not always easy to see how we progress together without someone pitting one community against another. We all know whānau directly affected by recent changes in government legislation. Who supports their voice?

Public sector job losses: the disestablishment of Te Aka Whaiora, cutting school lunches, proposed referendum on Māori Wards, co-governance, previous government expenditure, climate change, the geo-political climate are all blamed for rising inflation that jeopardises our most vulnerable. And in the meantime, unsolicited fast tracking of new legislation, superseding old legislation takes place quickly, many hoping under cover and unnoticed.

Recent geo-political manoeuvring in our immediate Moana-nui-a-Kiwa me te Moana-a-Tawhaki Oceanic highways provide fertile ground for further structural racism to go unchecked. Denial of the tangata whenua voice lies at the heart of the democratic majority rule driving these agenda and perpetuating structural inequality. It is vital to remember that working with the Tiriti partner and their lived realities creates sustainable and regenerative benefits for all. As faith communities, the key is for us to shift towards more inclusive dialogues with tangata whenua, the Tiriti partner, as we address these structural injustices. In dialogue we approach social inequalities and political challenges with empathy and greater mindfulness of each other. In an increasingly divided and polarised world, we must embrace a more compassionate and nuanced perspective as we navigate the complexities of our vulnerable communities, working together towards a more equitable and just future for all. In that space may we clearly hear ngā manu korihi o te ata.



REFLECTION



Chaplaincy all about being, rather than doing

Rev Dr Susan Thompson

I'm now in my fourth year as chaplain at Tamahere Eventide Home and Village. Nan likes to tell people that I don't work but spend most of my time eating popsicles and dancing with our residents.

Sometimes it feels a bit that way. Chaplaincy is about being present with people wherever they are. I spend some days dancing and other days praying, some days eating iceblocks and other days sitting by bedsides, some days playing bingo and other days holding hands. Every day is different, a rare privilege to be a part of people's lives.

Most retirement villages don't have a chaplain. At Tamahere we recognise that residents have a range of needs: physical, emotional, social and spiritual. It's my role to offer emotional and spiritual support to residents, families and staff.

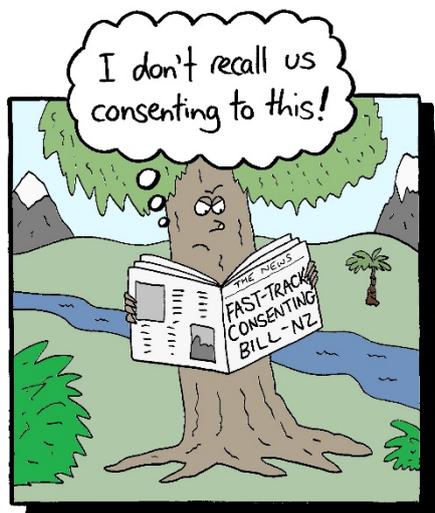
As chaplain I'm available for anyone who needs me. People don't have to come to chapel services or be religious to ask for my help. I'm here for everyone and I don't try to convert people. Tamahere is a diverse community made up of people with varied histories, experiences, faith traditions and viewpoints. I respect those differences.

I'm also happy to refer people to someone else if they decide they need a different kind of support. Theological college taught us the importance of referring people to those with specialised skills and training. I'm not precious about needing to be the person who offers assistance.

Contrary to my wife's jokes, I do undertake a range of tasks: leading chapel services (including funerals), visiting residents (at Tamahere and Waikato Hospital), facilitating a support group for the carers of people living with dementia, putting together our worship roster (alongside the Catholic worship team) and writing articles for the village magazine.

However, being present is also about just being there. Every day I walk around the village and care home and find someone who needs a kind word, a smile or a laugh, a listening ear or some other moment of connection in the midst of a busy or painful time. Being an open, cheerful, peaceful presence is sometimes far more important than any of the tasks I do. At its heart, chaplaincy is about being rather than doing.

Ngā manaakitanga, Susan



Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

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



Hope Begins with Water

Gillian Southey

Since 2008 Christian World Service has worked with the Centre for Community Solidarity (CCS) to build 1,250 rainwater tanks for families in Uganda affected by HIV and AIDS. The tanks are saving and revolutionising lives.

In southwest Uganda 15-year-old Mbabazi is settling into her first year of high school. Thanks to support from CWS last year, the CCS was able to build her family a new ferrocement rainwater tank with the help of the community.

Mbabazi won top marks in the Year 7 national primary school exams for her class and a high school scholarship. Without that tank, Mbabazi says she might not have been able to sit her exams at all. She says the new rainwater tank has saved many hours in her day. Instead of walking long distances to collect water in sometimes dangerous conditions, Mbabazi arrives at school on time and can manage her homework as well as her chores.

This family who lost their father to HIV and AIDS several years ago is flourishing. The children attend school regularly. They have water to drink, for washing and some for their vegetable garden. "We vehemently thank you for this wonderful water tank gift," says Mbabazi.

CCS forms village associations who manage a savings scheme and provide a support network for the caregivers, many of whom are grandparents. Members save half the costs of the rainwater tank, currently around \$316, and CWS covers the rest. Volunteers and staff share knowledge and skills to improve the health and livelihoods of these rural people.

Going to the Kagera river can be very risky for the children whose job it is to collect water. Last month CCS wrote to say 13-year-old Festo was killed by a crocodile. He was one of seven children who had walked down from a remote village in the hills to get water because there was none closer. A large crocodile dragged the boy from the shore and by the time the others had run to the nearest community for help it was too late.

CWS plans to help CCS build another 286 rainwater tanks and assist other partners with better water access. Please support the [Water Appeal](#) with your donation or by phoning 0800 74 73 72.

CWS Encourages Solidarity with West Papua

In March, Human Rights Monitor drew attention to the worsening human rights situation in West Papua. Indonesian military forces, including the police, have increasingly acted with impunity resulting in more extrajudicial killings, incidents of torture and ill-treatment in 2023. More than 76,000 people are displaced because of the activity of armed forces.

The Communion of Churches in Indonesia made a statement opposing torture and urging the protection of human rights in Papua.

West Papua has a large military presence and is being exploited for its rich mineral resources. Forests are being felled at an alarming rate and being replaced by large-scale palm oil and other plantations. More than 500,000 Papuans are reported to have lost their lives in the region, heavily controlled by Indonesian military forces.

General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Rev James Bhagwan [deplored](#) the treatment of three men tortured by military forces. At last year's assembly, PCC passed a resolution asking that the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights be allowed entry to West Papua.

Christian World Service has long advocated for the self-determination of West Papuans and the protection of their human rights.



Dancing and other sinful distractions on Choiseul

Lynne McDonald

Entertainment for the missionaries on Choiseul was limited to the occasional radio broadcast, reception permitting. Missionaries also sometimes had film or slideshows which they shared with the local people. Other diversions for the missionaries included the arrival of occasional visitors to the island, and visits away from Choiseul to celebrate the appointment of a new High Commissioner.

Sister Lucy Money noted that she did not enjoy these latter formal events. When invited to the welcome for the new High Commissioner she responded, "I don't think I am all that keen on these official functions anyway – hats (and even according to some people stockings) aren't in my line and I'd rather stay home." And she objected to the sea voyage to get to the venue in a crowded boat with children.

The use of guitars became more common among the local people in the Solomons after WWII. Although the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) missionaries generally restricted entertainments such as dance and secular music, some supported the use of ukuleles and guitars. Traditional music, such as the pan pipes was also seen as being "of the devil." The Methodists were not as strict about this, allowing some traditional playing of the pan pipes, which was strictly forbidden by the SDA. Methodist missionary nurse, Audrey Highnam said that pan pipe music was "fairyland sounding." She believed some missionaries were too holy-minded and that they "absolutely ruined the culture."

The Methodist missionaries encouraged membership of Boys' Brigade, which was enthusiastically accepted on Choiseul. The boys learned marching and drill and carried flags. The ritual and ceremony involved was attractive to the islanders. Some were sent to New Zealand for further training, and some officials from the New Zealand Boys' Brigade went to visit the Solomons. Drill and marching exercises, often with brass band instruments, were popular with SDA and Methodists alike. Methodist girls became involved in Girls' Life Brigade (GLB), later called Girls' Brigade.

In the early 1950s SDA Pathfinder clubs, which were like Boy Scouts or Boys' Brigade, provided instruction and recreational activities as well as spiritual instruction and guidance. While designed for children between the ages of 10 and the mid-teens, typically they became family clubs with children through to grandparents involved. In the 1970s their membership waned, possibly because the SDA, disregarding the community aspect of the people, restricted the membership to that for which the organisation was designed.

Dancing presented another dilemma for the Methodist missionaries to deal with. There was no rock and roll culture on Choiseul, however tralala dances proved popular. These most likely came from Fiji by way of islanders who had visited relatives there. Frowned on by Methodist missionary Rev John Metcalfe, Methodist missionary Rev George Carter had a more accommodating attitude and permitted the dances. There was a fear among the missionaries that with dancing, some of the old, pre-conversion behaviour might appear, which they did not want to see.

Each mission required sensitivity and discretion to deal with these matters, and sometimes it was not well-exercised. In 1931, the SDA publication Australasian Review included an article which described how God had saved people from "dancing and other follies". With the moral and spiritual safety of their converts in mind the SDA missionaries exercised caution about dancing.

Methodist missionaries organised slide shows on Choiseul, showing images of New Zealand and other parts of the world. Visiting SDA ministers sometimes showed movies, usually with a Christian message. The local people were easily influenced by new technology once they fully understood that the images were only that and not actually real. But it took a lot of convincing!



Edgar Percy (E.P) Blamires 1878 – 1967

Rev Donald Phillipps

When did the 'questioning Church' emerge? This contribution doesn't offer a final word but a claim can be made, in Aotearoa at least, that the idea of Church as a structure with centralised authority and knowledge was being questioned well before the turn of the 20th century.

Before the emergence of the Bible Class movement, there were, especially in the larger urban areas, groups like Mutual Improvement Societies, Debating Societies and Wesley Guilds. One was at Mornington Methodist Church in Dunedin in the early 1890s. It brought together younger members of church families, their friends and friends of friends - some of them tertiary students – all wanting to know more about their world and to overcome the limitations of their knowledge by questioning. Not by asking the local minister to provide answers, but by seeking for themselves through wide-ranging and intelligent interest in the way in which their society was adapting to a changing world.

It was from such groups and within such an environment that the NZ Methodist Bible Class movement emerged, alongside similar groups within the churches. The increasing growth of suburban church life was matched by the appearance of a host of Bible Classes, for young women as much as for young men, aware of each other and calling themselves Unions. The idea quickly spread and within a few years these Unions contained memberships from all over the various provinces (Methodist Districts). Conference was not slow to move, with all this energy finding expression, and a Connexional minister was appointed to organise 'youth work' that same year. Charles Porter was the first, followed by H.L. Blamires and then A.B. Chappell. When WW1 came and so much that the Christian Church stood for was called into question, it was the younger generation especially who answered the call to serve.

A century ago, at this very time in 1924, the 'Young People's Department' of the Methodist Church of NZ came into being. The first in a series of resolutions spoke of "the present-day youth problem". Conference agreed that it could "afford no lethargy in the face of the opposing forces of today". Although the language referred principally to concern about Church membership, those "opposing forces" encompassed a much larger world view. The shape of NZ society changed out of recognition during the inter-war years, 1919-1939. Firstly, that younger generation had experienced the trauma of war, had travelled far beyond the shores of Aotearoa, and had had their worldview inexorably shaken. They had experienced those "opposing forces" at first hand. And their children, growing up during that period were given a freedom to think for themselves that was beyond the imagining of the rigid patriarchy of the Victorian years. As significant was the slow descent into economic depression and with it the recognition of the incongruity of regarding this country as 'God's own'.

What emerged from the Connexional reflection and discussion was what became generally known as the 'Youth Movement.' The last of the former travelling Bible Class secretaries, C.H. Olds was replaced by Edgar Percy Blamires. For 17 years he was at the helm of NZ Methodist youth and their local, district and national activities. Edgar brought to his task both enthusiasm and determination but within the ethos of Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa he was both adaptable and understanding. He felt deeply about the significance of his work – even that he had a 'sense of destiny'. That what became the Youth Movement Methodist until nearly the end of the century speaks volumes about E.P.'s devotion and foresight. It was subsumed within the larger orbit of Christian Education in the 1950s - simply reflecting again the need for different structures for changing times.

From 20 – 26 May 2024, Youth Week will be celebrated. We all want Aotearoa to be a country where young people are encouraged to take up challenges. They are our future and we encourage them to think about the challenges ahead, to share ideas and to focus on the positive aspects of being young. We want to give our youth the freedom they need to do this, and to assure them of our unfailing support - especially if the going gets tough.