E whāia ana te pūtaketanga o ngā whakapono mō tēnei ao hurihuri
Exploring faith issues for today
# touchstone
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## A Rocha International co-founder Peter Harris, Discusses Conservation and Faith

At a recent series of events throughout Aotearoa, Peter Harris, co-founder of A Rocha International, shared words of wisdom with audiences eager to weave together their Christian values with the urgent call for environmental stewardship.

Presentations in Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin and Christchurch attracted over 270 people — many who have been involved and supported A Rocha in Aotearoa NZ, along with new friends — all keen to glean insights from a man whose life's work has been dedicated to bringing together faith and conservation. Peter spoke with authenticity and passion and attendees came away inspired with renewed motivation to care for creation.

Peter and his wife, Miranda, started A Rocha 40 years ago as a practical response to a growing conviction that the issue of our times was going to be the collapse of the biosphere. "My understanding of caring about what God cared for – which is what mission is – would have to include some sort of a response to that situation." That response was a bird observatory where "people of all faiths and none could gather around the table at the end of the day, discuss their field work, discuss their motivations for conservation, and we could find out what it meant to bring a distinctively Christian approach to conservation."

That bird sanctuary was in south Portugal at Quinta de Rocha, and so A Rocha ("The Rock" in Portuguese) was born. From the mid-1990s, Peter and Miranda helped set up other national projects in Lebanon, Kenya, France, Canada and the United Kingdom. A Rocha is now present in over 20 countries on six continents, including Aotearoa, and in many other countries through the Friends of A Rocha network.

The worlds of conservation and Christianity have not always overlapped, and there were times when Peter and his friends felt more synergy with the conservation world than with Christians. A deep faith in God has always been the "why" of conservation for Peter. "At the heart of conservation is one major question, and that's 'why does nature matter?'… When you're in creation as somebody who is prepared to recognise that Jesus is Lord, you're sharing that with the Lord of creation and you're drawn into something which is healing."

"Many conservationists are desperately trying to save the world, but we released ourselves in A Rocha a long time ago from that compulsion because the world has a saviour and it's not us. We're not going to save the world. But we are going to do our utmost to do the right thing and to serve the Lord in what we're doing." The motivation makes a subtle difference, "but it's noticeable when you drag yourself out of bed at 4am to put the nets up and get eaten by leeches!"

Peter suspects a hesitancy of the Christian world to get involved in conservation is the fear that we'll get distracted and lose our attention of the needs of people. Yet he encourages us that "from the very beginning, what it means to be human in Genesis is expressed in that command to 'shamar'* and 'abad'* – to keep and tend and look after the creation. We've forgotten how to read creation." *(in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament).

He urges us to live in God's world "in a more attentive way for what it's telling us. Jesus said: Look at the signs of the times…. Creation is telling us a lot in its groaning now. You have got to be deaf not to hear it."

When asked what gives him hope, Peter says, "I think hope is a practice; you practise hope." Peter lives a liturgical life, practising hope while waiting for the resurrection of the body and the coming renewal of creation. The practical conservation work of A Rocha also gives him hope. "I think we are supposed to feel a certain joy in seeing the fruit of good work over a long amount of time. It's nice being old in one sense because an amazing amount changes in 40 years … If I go back to the original Portuguese centre now, the acorns we put in the ground are 40-year-old trees!"

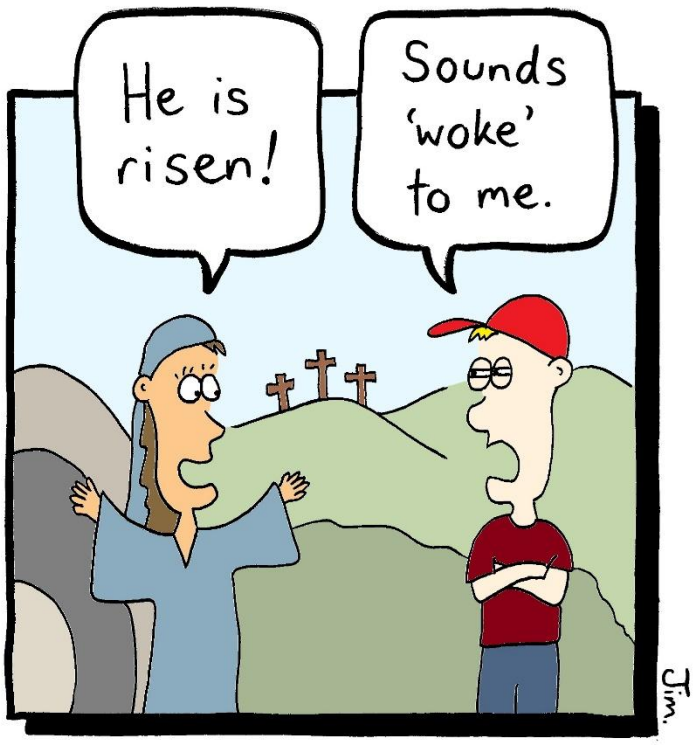
A Rocha began in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2007 and participates in numerous biodiversity restoration projects across the country, mobilising hundreds of volunteers to roll up their sleeves and actively participate in practical conservation.

In the coastal town of Whāingaroa Raglan A Rocha is involved in a landscape-scale biodiversity restoration project on and around the Karioi maunga. The project, Te Whakaoranga O Karioi, aims to restore the mountain's lush coastal ecosystem and to revive a remnant seabird colony – the grey-faced petrels, or ōi. Volunteers of all ages, backgrounds, and skills have come together to reestablish the once-thriving ōi seabird colony. Sustained community efforts in predator control and seabird monitoring began in 2009, and in 2017 the first ōi chick fledged from Karioi. Karioi now has a mainland breeding colony and has fledged 63 ōi chicks.

The Eco Church Aotearoa project, is another A Rocha initiative, working across the country to encourage church communities to embrace care of creation and active engagement in the restoration of nature as part of the life and mission of the church.

James Beck, Eco Church programme coordinator says churches are engaging with this message. "Churches are becoming hubs of eco-conscious activities, embodying the principles of environmental stewardship." Some Eco Churches do regular practical conservation work, some have embraced solar energy, others have implemented waste reduction measures, or cultivated community gardens to nourish both body and spirit. Discussions about conservation and restoration are becoming an integral part and expression of faith in Eco Churches, inspiring whānau and individuals to practise care of creation and adopt eco-friendly habits in their daily lives.

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## Jim's cartoon

Brendan Boughen

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



## Te Reo Aroha o te Aranga - Love Language of the Easter

Rev Keita Hotere

Love language can be expressed in a myriad of ways. During my upbringing I eagerly anticipated the Holy Week, for in the Taitokerau, Northland, it marked the ceremonial tradition of our Hura Kohatu - a ceremonial unveiling of whānau memorial stones. Whānau gathered from near and far and most often several memorial headstones were unveiled together. This post-colonial tradition of Hura Kohatu during Aranga Easter was deliberately aligned with this time to acknowledge the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Te Aranga mai o Ihu Karaiti.

Hura Kohatu has evolved over time and as a commemorative event it is the last tangible expression of love from whānau, symbolizing our deep affection and respect for our departed whānau members. Consequently, the roles and responsibilities we assume in organizing Hura Kohatu with grace and reverence becomes important. The preparation of memorial stones, that includes appropriate wording or symbols, travel arrangements, and hospitality at the marae can all take months to organise and are powerful symbolic acts of service. People are mobilized to provide kai (food), organise pōwhiri (welcome), deliver whaikōrero (speeches) and karakia (offering words of affirmation), sing waiata (songs) to uplift each other, and the memory of whānau members passed. It is a time of honoring memory, and the teachings and stories passed down through the generations.

Aranga was viewed by our tupuna as a tapu time in the Māori Christian calendar. The resurrection of Jesus, a pivotal event in Christian belief embraced by our whānau serves as a symbol of hope and transformation in times of darkness and hopelessness. Hura Kohatu acts metaphorically, in the context of Aotearoa, that speaks to the risen Christ and life moving forward in different ways. With Christ, the disciples moved forward in ways different to when Jesus was with them. So too do our whanau after the Hura Kohatu. The expressions of love manifest in the act of Hura Kohatu are boundless. The profound narrative of the Aranga story continues to resonate across cultures, influencing our love language of forgiveness, redemption, faith, and renewal. Regardless of our circumstance and whatever struggles we may face we turn with hope to the new life that the resurrection brings.

*E Te Ariki*

*E tatari ana ahau ki a koe*

*E tatari ana tōku wairua*

*E tūmanako ana tōku reo ki a koe*

*Aianei ake tonu atu Āmine.*




## Celebrating and Nurturing Our Talented Creatives

TeRito Peyroux-Semu | Vice President

March this year, like many of the years before, is a vibrant month for cultural expression and community festivals. particularly for Pacific creatives and younger people, We congratulate and celebrate all our *Meko whānau who took part or helped support the success of all festivals this year.

Celebrations include the Pasifika Festival, ASB Polyfest and Auckland Arts Festival in Tāmaki Makaurau; the Canterbury Polyfest in Ōtautahi; the Moana Nui Festival in Ōtepōti; and a host of other celebrations of Pacific culture in various local and regional areas. In addition, the Fiafia concerts/showcases often held by schools and community groups before or afterwards, all provide an opportunity and platform for writers, composers, directors, costume and set designers and creators, musicians, singers, dancers, orators, artists, group and community leaders, and their support crews to express themselves and highlight or offer insight into contextual issues, in ways that are relevant, unique to and embracing of their culture and heritage.

The themes explored from year to year are as varied as the people, languages, and dialects of the Pacific: reviving ancestral chants, dances and legends, as well as engaging with more current contemporary, social, environmental, or even political issues.

Earlier in the month, I was invited to attend the opening night of 'O le Pepelo, le Gaoi, ma le Pala'ai' (The Liar, the Thief, and the Coward) which was a collaboration between Auckland Arts Festival, Auckland Theatre Company and I Ken So Productions, at the ASB Waterfront Theatre. The promotional brief for the show was intriguing: "Power, politics and tradition collide in this darkly comic piece. Using both English and Gagana Sāmoa, this is a modern tale of a man who's out of step with the times and whose time is running out. Who will survive?". But the drawcard for me was the fact that one of the playwrights who was also the director, Natano Keni, and the creative composer, Poulima Salima, were both Meko family from my youth! The following day, I managed to catch up with another of my Meko family from way back, a close friend of mine, Siu Williams-Lemi, who along with her sister Leah Williams-Partington are the creatives behind Loopy Tunes Preschool Music. Both Siu and Leah were flown up that weekend from Ōtautahi, to do sets on the Aotearoa Stage at the Pasifika Festival.

Although each of the highly accomplished and talented creatives that I've mentioned have moved on from the Methodist parishes that they were once part of, I still claim them as my Meko family (from back in the days of Youth Treks, Pacific Christian Youth Conferences, National Christian Youth Conventions and Methodist Youth Conference). I hold a heart full of gratitude, respect and love for each of them - and the many others who do the same - for their ability to skillfully continue to connect and engage with parts of our communities that we as a Hāhi often do not.

How do we best nurture, encourage and take care of the creatives in our midst? Especially the ones that aren't afraid to challenge societal norms or even our own individual and collective comfort zones.

- *Meko: Shortened mainly Samoan form of Methodist/Metotisi*



## Journeying through Methodist Legacy: Epworth Easter Camp!

'Amelia Takataka

Methodist youth groups are gearing up for Epworth Easter Camp 2024. This annual gathering, hosted by the Youth Activities Committee (YAK) and Waikato-Waiariki Unite, holds a special place in the hearts of many. Easter Camp is a time of high energy, fellowship, and spiritual growth, unfolding against the backdrop of the picturesque mighty Waikato River. 'Amelia Takataka reflects on the rich Methodist heritage that underpins this cherished tradition.

**Epworth's Rich History**

Epworth Retreat and Recreation Centre, nestled on 10 acres of land, was gifted to the Methodist Church in 1949 by Arthur Finlay. Named after the birthplace of John Wesley, Epworth provides a safe and affordable adventure ecosystem with accommodation. The site fosters a feeling of relaxed companionship, community and welfare. Youth across Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa come together over Easter weekend to deepen their faith, foster community, and connect with rangatahi from various backgrounds.

**Unsung Heroes: The Backbone of Epworth Easter Camp**

Shane and Lisa Vanin have dedicated almost a decade as leaders of Epworth Easter Camp. Their commitment to creating an inclusive, and transformational camp for rangatahi is truly commendable.

We thank Karen and Grant Jack, and their family. They are our culinary magicians and their dedication and catering skills ensure that everyone at camp is well-fed and nourished. I also acknowledge the unwavering Kaitiakitanga (stewardship) of Ingrid Laxon, the Epworth Manager, and the collective effort of the Easter Camp Youth Leaders who serve our young people year after year. Their dedication is the cornerstone of Epworth's success.

**Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion**

Over time, Epworth has evolved into a sanctuary of diversity and inclusion, where rangatahi come together as one whanau, finding a sense of belonging and unity. Attendees come from our National Synods from the central South Island to Auckland Manukau as well as from our cultural Synods including Vahefonua Tonga, Wasewase o viti kei Rotuma, and Sinoti Samoa.

**"Unshamable" Theme for Easter Camp 2024**

The theme, "Unshamable," based on Romans 1:16, encourages rangatahi to boldly embrace their identity as followers of Christ. It is a message that resonates deeply with today's youth as they navigate the challenges of an ever-changing world. Through worship, speaker presentations, small group studies, and interactive activities, rangatahi explore and discover ways to "faith" in a way that speaks to their spirit. Youth come together in fellowship, deepen their spiritual connections, and celebrate the message of Easter in a vibrant and inclusive way.

We honour our Methodist heritage and the traditions that have shaped us into the community we are today. As new leaders emerge and pass the torch to the next generation, we are filled with hope and excitement for the future of Epworth Easter Camp. As we embark on this Easter journey, let us be guided by the spirit of love, unity, and service. May God continue to watch over us all, now and always.




## Making a Difference

Amidst the pressing challenges of climate change, the concept of one parish or one person making a difference can feel discouraging. Rev John Carr, the presbyter for the Western Bay of Plenty Parish shares how his parish is working towards being better kaitiaki.

At times it feels to me as though the challenges are so big that the problem is too immense to make a difference. However, I remind myself that small acts can collectively make a profound difference in safeguarding our planet for future generations.

At the forefront of our efforts is a theological reflection rooted in our Methodist tradition. Wesley believed that the Gospel was able to address the human predicament and that those who believed in the Gospel were able to do something about their predicament. Part of the Good News then is to know that we have been loved and because of this love we must now go and spread love. We are called to embody compassion and care for both our fellow human beings and the Earth itself.

I know that not every church has a lot of resources to make a big impact. I hope that by sharing a few of the things we are doing, one or more may be accessible to you.

- We have installed a bike rack and actively encourage people to cycle to church. This is reducing carbon emissions and fostering community engagement and physical well-being.
- We have a 'Share Table' which provides a platform for the exchange of goods, promoting sustainability and the ethos of sharing within our community. People share books, produce from their gardens, soap, makeup, Christmas ornaments and much more…
- We are doing our best to make good dietary choices for the planet. I am a vegan and every Thursday my church people have committed to having a vegan morning tea.
- We have committed to sourcing exclusively fair-trade coffee, as we are working to do our best for the climate and working towards a kinder way of being in the world.
- Our Op Shop is a testament to our commitment to recycling and reusing, offering a sustainable alternative to traditional consumerism. If operating an Op Shop is not possible, you could try to shop exclusively at Op Shops.
- We keep an eye on waste when we gather as a church. We have reusable communion cups for worship and for coffee to minimise waste and promote responsible consumption.
- One of the most important things we are doing is trying to educate people. We do this through dialogue, study opportunities and sermons. We have joined A Rocha Eco Church NZ. The organisation provides resources designed to help educate people about climate justice. Learning more about what we can and should be doing to make a difference is important because it can be so difficult to know the right things.

As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, our community hopes to remain steadfast in our dedication to environmental justice. Our actions, though individually small, collectively bear witness to our shared commitment as kaitiaki, on the Earth.

At this moment in history, let us all join hands in the pursuit of a more just and sustainable world. Together we can make a difference.



## Western Bay of Plenty Parish striving to be good allies to the Rainbow community

For two years, the Western Bay of Plenty Parish has been sponsoring the Tauranga Moana Pride Festival. Rev John Carr  says it is a partnership that is proving to be successful for the Rainbow community and for a parish that prides itself on practising a prophetic and loving vision for inclusion.

Whenever I talk about prophets at church I tell the people that "a prophet is someone who draws close to God and God draws close to them and they know what is important. A prophet could be anyone, there could be a prophet in this very room with us." I believe that is true.

When Jesus walked around on earth he made a concerted effort to stand with people who were not fully accepted by society, people who were not fully included and people who did not have a seat of power and privilege. Jesus allied himself with those who were hurting.

I originally come from the United States of America and from my perspective, Aotearoa New Zealand is a loving, accepting and inclusive place. I know that there is still a long way to go and that we are far from perfect but I was still surprised, and deeply saddened, when I learned that in Aotearoa New Zealand it is, statistically speaking, five times more likely for someone from the Rainbow community to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.

To follow Jesus, to gain a prophetic perspective by drawing close to God, we must ally ourselves with those who are hurting. Our Western Bay of Plenty parish strives to be a place where we welcome people from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, nationalities, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities. We want to share God's love in its many forms. We want to say to each person that no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Sometimes being welcoming is not enough. Sometimes we must do more, we must accompany hospitality with action. The problem is, like many pākehā churches in the Methodist Connexion, we are getting older and we find that as a parish we have less energy than we used to. This does not change the need for action and allyship; it just changes the way we go about it.

Our first year as a sponsor for the Tauranga Moana Pride Festival was 2023. It is a week-long festival in Tauranga where the Rainbow community is celebrated. It is an event where people can have fun, be themselves, and feel safe. We decided that we wanted to be known publicly as a safe place that allied itself with the Rainbow community. Directly after the first festival, we had people contacting the church to express their appreciation that a church was stepping into that space. We had people from the Pride Fest partner with us later in the year to hold a workshop at our church where we brought in theologians from all over Aotearoa to discuss how churches could be safe spaces.

We have now been sponsors for two years and we intend to continue to lend support to the Rainbow community and the Tauranga Moana Pride Festival. We want to be known as a church that practises a prophetic and loving vision for inclusion. We want to draw close to God and know what is important in this world. We want to be a church where all people know that they are welcome. And so, we will continue to strive to be good allies to the Rainbow community.



## No One Suffers Alone

Rev Dr Jione Havea

With the unexpected death of **Efeso Collins** on 21 February 2024, the New Zealand Parliament lost a Pasifika-affirming body, voice, and heart, from its membership. Collins was an academic and politician. He looked out for the interests of Pasifika and Māori communities and, when he joined the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, for ecological wellbeing. A comment by the new co-leader of the Green Party, Chlöe Swarbrick, rings in my native ears: "We know as the late great Efeso Collins put it, that: 'No one stands alone, no one succeeds alone, and no one suffers alone'."

**Polyculturality**

I did not know Collins - and may he rest in peace - but I have learned that he was born and raised at Otara to humble blue-collar parents whose roots go back to Samoa and Tokelau.

Collins' words reflect the relational cultures from and with which he came. I italicise cultures because each one of us, in my opinion, is poly-cultural: each one of us belongs to, and has been conditioned by, many cultures. And from time to time, we embody and reflect those cultures in the ways that we think and do things.

Sometimes, our cultures conflict (themselves) and confuse (us). This is one of the big challenges for migrants (like me) and for our overseas born children (like Collins). We need to negotiate the cultures of our parents at our old home with the cultures in our new home, alongside our cultured neighbors.

I humbly say that it is the same for tangata whenua: they cannot avoid being poly-cultural given the many cultures that have come ashore to Aotearoa New Zealand. Being poly-cultural is our reality, for both manuhiri and tangata whenua, and it is challenging.

A longer talanoa is needed on how each culture, on their own, is already many and multiple. But at this point, my agenda is to suggest that realising that we are poly-cultural peoples helps us affirm the need to accommodate, and negotiate, when cultural matters conflict and confuse.

**Solidarity**

Collins' words affirm the drive of my article in last month's issue of Touchstone: that collaboration (compared to the PM's appeal to 'unity') is what we need. Collaboration is about acting and working together, with our differences and confusions, and this is important because, as Collins put it, "No one stands alone."

The assertions that we do not stand alone and that we need to collaborate echo a keyword of liberation theology – solidarity. In many relational cultures, solidarity is why things happen the way they do; in relational cultures, solidarity is expected and even taken for granted.

Collins was a politician but he, like most Pasifika people, grew up in a church setting. And for all of us, church cultures make up a big part of our polyculturality. But we do not tend to see churches as cultural institutions, and many of us resist negotiating church traditions.

**Hushed Saturday**

In the Christian Calendar, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are highlighted as climaxes in the relation between God and humans. Jesus died for the sins of the world on Good Friday and rose from death on Easter Sunday to give humans hope – that death is not the end. These two days testify that in God's eyes, "No one stands alone."

The Saturday in-between, however, is not often acknowledged. In some Christian circles it is called "Black Saturday," an unkind designation that reflects and feeds the racialised mindset of Christian people. But considering Collins's words, I ask: Did anyone suffer alone on that Saturday?

This question shifts the attention to the people around Jesus. On his final day of suffering, his disciples had fled but his mother was there with two other women. The "three Mary's" were not alone on the Good Friday, but their suffering would have been immense. And what happened to them on the Hushed Saturday, before they went to the tomb on the Easter Sunday morning?

Other people were also at the crucifixion – the two crucified criminals, the high priests, scribes, elders, centurion, soldiers, passers-by, bystanders, and a crowd. A few of them would not have witnessed a crucifixion before, and they would have been traumatized. What happened to those few on the Hushed Saturday?

My questions invite us to un-hush the realities of the Saturday, and to see that there is more suffering in the story than just the suffering of Jesus. Maybe Collins is correct, that no one suffers alone. But many people are traumatized when they are alone.

**Other-kinds**

Talks about collaboration and solidarity tend to be about, and in the interests of, humans. I imagine that the "one" in Collins' "No one" is a human person as well.

So, this is an opportunity to check our solidarity radar: how do we get to the point where we also stand together with "other-kinds" and not just with the "humankind"?

By "other-kinds" I am referring to animals and plants, as well as to land, sea, sky, and underworld – the subjects that should be significant in the Green Party that Collins joined. Do they stand alone? Do they succeed alone? Do they suffer alone?

Put differently: Who stands with other-kinds? Who succeeds at the expense of other-kinds? And who suffers because of the hushing of other-kinds?

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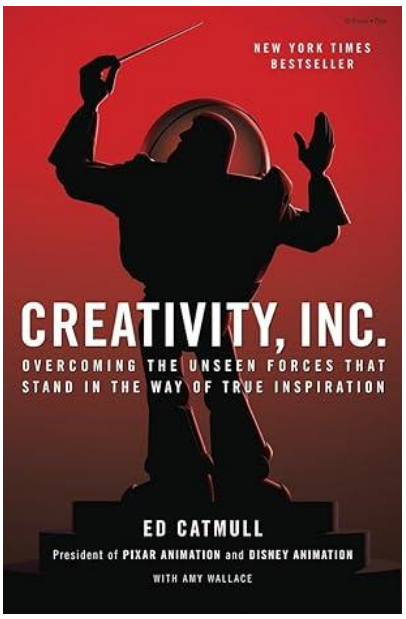
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## Finding the Sweet Spot Between the Known and The Unknown

Rev Dr Mary Caygill

I think it would be fair to say that wherever you look, or listen into, these days there is a surplus of change and transition in the air. We have it within our political life, our work life, our church organisational life, our personal life as I, who turns 70 within the next few weeks, know all too well, into another season of the life cycle.

Ed Catmull, American computer scientist, creative animator, and co-founder of Pixar maintained, 'there is a sweet spot between the known and the unknown where originality happens; the key is to be able to linger there without panicking'.

My thoughts turn again to what I know, have, and will, continue to experience of significant transitional experiences, such that we find ourselves in within this movement of people called Methodist here within Aotearoa. There is a familiar, predictable pattern to any major cycle of transition. Firstly, something ends. Secondly, there is an in-between season marked by disorientation, disidentification, and disengagement. Finally, and often after a very long and painful struggle, something new emerges.

The middle phase of the process is of sacred importance. It is by nature and of significance a liminal space, or as the Celtic peoples name as 'thin' spaces. Celtic spirituality and many Indigenous spiritualities near and far, acknowledge that it is in these 'thin' liminal spaces, where the presence of the divine is keenly palpable. Thin spaces are wild, messy places – threshold spaces where God is very much at work. It is in these thin spaces that we, individually and collectively, are broken open, and we come afresh to encounter ourselves, our relationships with others and with God, in deeper and more authentic ways.

Writer, contemplative, Franciscan brother, Richard Rohr speaks vividly of God's use of liminal, thin, threshold, places. "All transformation takes place here. We have to allow ourselves to be drawn out of "business as usual" and remain patiently on the "threshold" (limen) where we are betwixt and between the familiar and the completely unknown. There our old world is left behind, while we are not yet sure of the new existence. That's a good space where genuine newness can begin … It's the realm where God can best get at us because our false certitudes are finally out of the way. This is the sacred space where the old world is falling apart, and a bigger world is revealed. If we don't encounter liminal space in our lives, we start idealizing normalcy."

The natural human response is to resist liminality and to strive backward to the old familiar identity, or forward to the unknown identity. The ambiguity and disorientation are at times so heightened that the very work required to move forward can become impossible to engage. We as Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa must find the discipline and stamina to stay within this daunting yet sacred, thin, threshold space and place we find ourselves poised within. Already and Not Yet. That is the way we are called to follow. It's what reformations are always about. Remember the words of Ed Catmull, "there is a sweet spot between the known and the unknown where originality happens; the key is to be able to linger there without panicking.'



## On Work, Faith and Life

**Dr Soana Muimuiheata** signs off her emails with a footnote she wrote in 2002. "Only one life that will one day Past, Only what is done with Love will Last". The phrase influences her daily work, faith and church life. Soana, a highly respected New Zealand Registered Dietitian and health consultant, has a lifelong association with the Methodist Church and is National Secretary for the NZMWF. Soana is a strong role model for her church and work community.

On the day I call, Soana is between appointments at a consultancy clinic she operates at the Mangere East Medical Centre. Providing advice and support for people with diabetes is a major component of her work. Her faith drives her motivation to benefit the wellbeing of her clients, and her Tongan church community. "I am deeply concerned by the health status of our women. The church has a role to play in supporting the wellbeing of our people. Through NZMWF we support our young families."

Soana arrived in New Plymouth as an 18-year-old scholarship recipient. Following a year at New Plymouth Girls' High School she studied nutrition and food science at Otago University. On graduating with health science degrees, she returned to Tonga to work for the Ministry of Health. Over the next decade Soana worked between Tonga and Auckland, moving to reside permanently in Auckland in 2002. In 2019 with the support of a Health Research Council Scholarship, she returned to university to complete her Doctoral degree.

Soana is concerned by the male dominated culture that leaves many Pasifika women vulnerable. The late Queen of Tonga, Queen Salote has been her inspiration and she is deeply committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of Pasifika women and children in a holistic way.
Beyond her health-related professional work, Soana spends up to 20 hours each week involved in church, parish and women's fellowship – she has held the position of NZMWF secretary for 2023-2025. The recent focus has been on World Prayer Day, communicating with churches all over New Zealand. Now the emphasis has moved towards planning for the South Pacific Area (SPA) Conference in Samoa in September and the Methodist Woman's Conference in Auckland the following month.

Planning is well in hand for the SPA Conference, where Soana and her fellow National Executive will be joined by more than 70 members of the NZMWF. The entire delegation will perform and present to representatives from the Pacific region, during the Conference that runs from 4 to 8 September.

Juggling the demands of a hectic schedule comes naturally to Soana who admits she thrives on multi-tasking. She says, "My faith is my strength, and love. If we focus on love, we overcome challenges and hard times. Love not pride, grace not might."

**Refection – Luke 8: 21**
Jesus' Mother and Brothers
19 Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. 20 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."
21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

For over 2000 years of remembrance of Easter, Jesus died for our sin. The greatest love in humankind. Let 2024 a reminder that Jesus' Mother and Brothers, are those who put into practice what we learnt and seen in him. Living testimony. Jesus comes against that cultural standard and sees, hears and values women for who they are: humans.




## Pilgrims for Gaza

On the morning of 8 March, a dozen pilgrims in Rangiora began the first Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage with prayer. They set out on a 41 kilometre walk to Otautahi Christchurch, demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, in solidarity with people ravaged by the war.

The group grew to almost 50 pilgrims as they continued to the Christchurch Transitional Cathedral, walking the final section in silence. They carried a banner with the handwritten names of more than 10,000 children killed in the war. More pilgrims joined for the final liturgy inside before sharing traditional Palestinian lentil soup prepared and served by local Palestinians.

The pilgrims stopped at the Al Noor Mosque where they were warmly greeted by Palestinian friends. Iman Gamal Fouda spoke about the community's commitment to peace, their work to build understanding here in Aotearoa and their opposition to semiautomatic weapons, before recounting the events of 15 March, 2019.

Rev Robin Humphreys, minister of Beckenham Methodist Church, joined the walk with her family at the mosque. "As a family we decided to be a part of the walk weeks prior, as a statement of support as well as to continue to educate our children on the importance of living out our faith. It was an experience for us of actively answering Christ's call to seek peace for all," she said.

Organiser Cole (surname withheld), from Aotearoa Christians for Peace, said it was particularly poignant when the group planning the event realised the pilgrimage was one week before the city marked the fifth anniversary of the attack on the two Christchurch mosques.

"It felt wrong to recognise the hate in Gaza without recognising the hate and violence in Aotearoa, and the need for decolonisation and an end to the occupation here," he added.

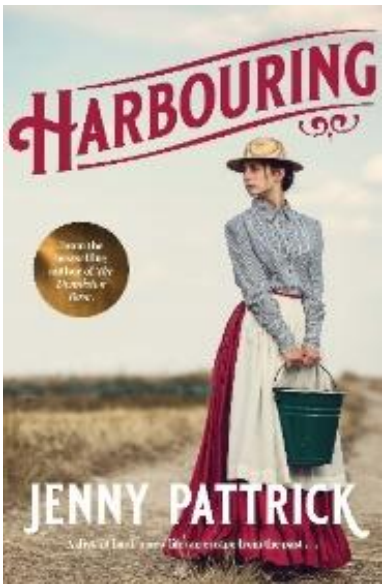
A newly formed network of Christian activists, Common Grace Aotearoa and Aotearoa Christians for Peace organised pilgrimages in Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau, Poneke Wellington and Whanganui through Lent.

The Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage grew from a walk made by Australian-based Kiwi James Harris burdened by the war. Internationally, 173 pilgrimages have been planned during Lent in 19 countries.

Pilgrims support a common platform calling for an enduring and sustainable ceasefire, immediate humanitarian assistance, the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinians held in Israel's prisons, and the end of the occupation as steps toward a just peace.








## Harbouring

Author: Jenny Pattrick
Publisher: Penguin, 2022
Reviewer: Diana Roberts

How much do we know about early Māori missionaries? How much do we know about Wesleyan Methodist missions in places other than the North and perhaps Taranaki? Too little. Yet what a rich and complex story they can tell Methodists today.

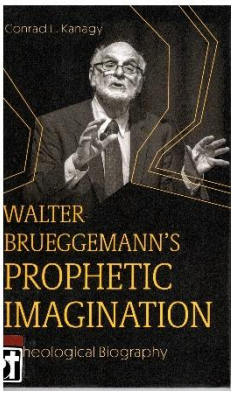
The author of this novel, well known for her earlier popular novel The Denniston Rose, comes from a Methodist background associated with the Wesley Taranaki Street Church, Wellington. Her life has been based in Wellington so she has a strong connection to and understanding of the setting and characters of Harbouring. The harbour of the title is Wellington Harbour, Te Whanganui a Tara, as it was in the 19th century in the years surrounding the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Chapter one introduces us to two of the main characters, Huw and Martha Pengellin, in Newport, Wales where life is grim for them and their families. Huw seizes the opportunity offered to him by Colonel Wakefield of the New Zealand Company and joins a ship bound for the fledgling Wellington settlement. Martha follows on another ship to share the difficulties and possibilities of their new home. Not many pages later we meet the third important character, Hineroa, enslaved to a Kapiti Coast tribe.

The story of these three strong, courageous people unfolds as they meet the challenges of a new life. They come to know Minarapa, himself a former slave, who becomes a friend to them all. He is a Māori missionary, deputed by Revs Bumby and Hobbs to oversee the Wesleyan mission station at Te Aro Pa. Minarapa finds himself under pressure from intertribal hostilities, political influence, the New Zealand Company's increasing demands for land and Victorian morality. The stresses and struggles of the developing settlement are brought vividly to life through the characters who become real people to us. We feel their hope, exhaustion, anxiety and satisfaction.

The author has researched the history thoroughly and consulted carefully over the use of Te Reo and Tikanga Māori. She is a wonderful storyteller and superb writer who makes accessible to us what has previously been available mostly only through scholarly works. This book is "a good read" which widens and deepens our understanding.

Note: Minarapa, the Wakefield's and several other characters are figures from our country's history. Huw, Martha and Hineroa are fictional characters.




## Walter Brueggemann's Prophetic Imagination: a theological biography

Author: Conrad L Kanagy

Publisher: Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2023, 215 pages.

Reviewer: John Thornley

Walter Brueggemann was born on 11 March, 1933. His life's work has been in theological studies focused on the Old Testament. The focus for Kanagy's book is Brueggemann's 1978 book, The Prophetic Imagination, described as "the defining theological contribution of Brueggemann's life".

The author has the full cooperation of Brueggemann in writing his book. Kanagy reveals details of the subject's early life that will be new to readers of the academic studies. This includes Brueggemann's ancestry in post-nineteenth century Germany, rural life in Missouri and family influences, including the model of a father as a dedicated pastor within a community unsympathetic to religion.

Studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York from 1956 to 1961 saw Brueggemann's writings and preaching responding to change and challenge in the nation, from Civil Rights to the election of Trump as President.

Kanagy outlines the diverse sources that led Brueggemann to the writing of The Prophetic Imagination. These include the rhetoric of Black church liturgies, Jewish writers, sociologists, Marx and Freud, and above all, his own knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, with focus on the Psalms and Jeremiah.

One chapter covers the psalms of lament as prayers both personal and collective. Kanagy writes, "While always in the presence of God, he was not always at peace with God. Like the God whose inner being was sometimes in turmoil, so was his … the church has been less willing to believe that lament is relevant or appropriate… But Brueggemann took lament seriously and reintroduced lament to the liturgy of the church. Arguably, he did more than anyone to return the church to lament and away from denial and false exuberance."

Another chapter covers a keynote talk given to the 2018 annual Summit of Sojourners. Brueggemann speaks of the dangers of totalism, "Totalism is the enemy of imagination. It seeks total control, threatens any possible allies of the prophet, and creates economies where the gains go in one direction only."

The presentation concludes, "Finally I want to make a comment about the institutional church. The institutional church is a very weak instrument for the prophetic imagination. But it is the best institution we've got. It is the best instrument we've got because when people come to church they expect us to talk funny. They expect us to talk about God. And I believe we are now at a point when the church has got to recover its nerve and its energy and its courage and its freedom. To be about our proper business, the church cannot engage in prophetic imagination so long as it lives in the cocoon of totalism. And that of course is where many clergy and laity want the church to stay. Because you get rewards for that, and you get money, and you get payoffs and you get success. But our mandate and vocation are otherwise."

Prayers, poetry and sermon collections, published this century, take readers to the heart of Brueggemann's faith journey. As Kanagy says: "Walter's prayers and preaching (words added by reviewer) are full of the hope that comes as we look beyond the temporary nature of empires, the temporary nature of our existence, and to the permanence of God."

I enjoyed Kanagy's journey with Brueggemann's life and writings. He encourages me to go back to 1978 and read again The Prophetic Imagination. A good prompt to move forward in 2024.





## Ex-Auckland Methodist Archives Volume Conservation Project

Katherine Doig, Archivist MCNZ

Last year the Connexional Office approved a request for funding to cover the employment of a specialist conservator on a contract basis for the remedial treatment, context-checking, and boxing of the approximately 35 linear metres of naked volumes transferred into the care of the Christchurch Methodist Archives from the former Auckland Methodist Archives when it closed several years ago. MCNZ archivist Katherine Doig reports on the work that was completed in January.

These volumes included Parish Minute Books, Circuit Schedules, and similarly historically valuable information dating from the mid-19th century onwards, from parishes throughout the North Island. The archives were at threat of further physical degradation should they have been left in their former state: loose on the repository shelves with no discernible logical order and inadequately listed, if listed at all.

Stephen Doig (my brother, former conservator of Invercargill City Libraries and Archives) was engaged to undertake this project over his Christmas holidays from his day job as a teacher aide at Hagley High School and spent 10 full days at Archives in Christchurch in January, completing the work to a very high standard, as seen from the before and after pictures. We made several intriguing finds while examining the volumes together. Perhaps most poignantly, given the current political climate in Aotearoa, a parish minute book entry from Auckland detailing with pride David Lange's 1984 landslide electoral victory, including a clipping of a newspaper article in which Lange stated that his election as PM meant that "ordinary people don't have to live in fear anymore…[they] are not at risk of having their living standards attacked, while people who don't need it get a lot more than they need."

These precious volumes are now boxed appropriately. Any loose leaves or items found within the volumes have been encapsulated and carefully attached to the volumes in the correct places. Paper tears and fractured spines have been mended and new volume markers with corrected contextual details have been made for each of the volumes.

Once I have checked and amended the holdings listings or listed the volumes for the first time, I will item code them, label the boxes they are now housed in and record the details using our new metadata template. The items will then be tagged for digitisation and future upload to our new Recollect website where appropriate (more about this in a future Touchstone article), and the originals allowed a secure and dignified retirement.

I am thankful to the Connexional Office for investing in professional conservation services and equipment for this important series of archives, and to Stephen for his exemplary and diligent work and lovely company throughout January.



## Hohepa Otene (and Joseph Orton)

**1808 – 1874**

Rev Donald Phillipps

For a couple of decades, at least, in the earlier years of the Wesleyan Mission in New Zealand, it was a fairly common practice to give a converted and baptised member of the tangata whenua a new and extra name. Sometimes they were the surnames of some notable Methodist leader on the other side of the world, but mostly it was someone with whom the candidate for baptism could more immediately identify. One example of this was the name given to a rangatira at the heads of the Manukau Harbour – named for John Bumby, who lost his life in a boating accident on the Hauraki. This man became known as Pumipi. It is hard to avoid the impression that such actions were, to a degree, designed to commend the missionary in the eyes of his superiors in London.

It is exactly 150 years since the death of Hohepe te Otene Pura, born at Rotopipiwai, on the Hokianga, about 1790. His kin were leaders on the northern shores of that harbour, which during the 1830s was the scene of a good deal of unrest arising, naturally enough, from the increasing presence of European settlers and by the consequent disruption of both traditional living patterns and the presence of firearms. Titaha Whito and his wife Moeawa Titahi were of Te Uri Mahoe, a subtribe of Ngāpuhi. As an aside it is significant that the husband was a nephew of the great Hongi. What was going on across the other side of Tai Tokerau could not but affect the Hokianga people. When the Wesleyan Mission was established at Mangungu around 1830 it found itself inevitably caught up in various struggles to re-establish some kind of equilibrium.

The missionaries who came and went during that period all recognised the necessity of developing consistent relationships with their neighbours. The son of Titaha and Moeawa was to become known, as the result of his baptism, as Hohepa Otene Pura – though only the Otene name was generally used. He had been born into a family with chieftainly influence in the Mangamuka Valley. He was nearly 40 when the Mission opened, and he became involved in its works within a couple of years. Having himself been converted in about 1835 he then became most active in the conversion of his own people on the northern side of the harbour. He was a signatory to Te Tiriti at Waitangi, but not when Hobson moved to Mangungu to gain more allies. It was at Waitangi that he signed himself Hohepa Otene Pura. By 1845 he had moved further north to the site of the original Wesleyan Mission at Kaeo, and there he remained for a decade or so until he was appointed Native Assistant Minister at Mangatawhiri in the northern Waikato from 1857 - 1864. It would be interesting to know why the Mission's leaders chose a man of such mana to occupy this already troubled area; was it to offer a role in its pacification? The outbreak of Land Wars was signalled in 1863 by British troops crossing the Mangatawhiri Stream, declared sometime before by Kingitanga to be their autaki (boundary). By now Hohepa Otene was in his 'advanced years' and he moved north to Matauri Bay, where he died in late March 1874. He returned home to Mangamuka to be buried.

A word also needs to be said about Joseph Rennard Orton, the English Wesleyan missionary. Born in Hull in 1795, he entered the Methodist ministry in 1826 and was immediately sent to Jamaicia. There he was actively engaged in the anti-slavery movement, was wrongfully imprisoned, and because of his incarceration his health was permanently undermined. On his release he returned to England, but was then sent to Australia in 1831 to be the District Chairman. He resided in both Sydney and then Hobart and is remembered for his strong leadership among the scattered Wesleyans. While living in Hobart he visited Aotearoa in 1833

for ten weeks, and later for several months in 1839,  waiting to find a ship that would take him to Tonga. Eventually his health gave out and he died on his way home in 1842.  A biographer described him as both ‘saintly’ and ‘gallant’ – high praise even for those days.