



Hui Tōpu 2025

Te Aroha Rountree, MCNZ President

MCNZ Conference 2025 was much more than a business meeting. It was a moment of spiritual reorientation, a convocation of people seeking to renew their commitment to God's transforming love.

Conference 2025 carried a deeply resonant theme: **God's Aroha – A Call to Sacred Transformation**. The gathering was grounded firmly in the Methodist tradition and in Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural heritage as embodied in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

One of the most significant and forward-looking streams from Conference 2025 was the ongoing work on climate justice, especially the proposed Climate-Induced Displacement Policy. The Church has centred its 2025 agenda on the human stories behind climate change – particularly migration and displacement within the Pacific and Aotearoa itself. Throughout its new calendar focused on "Climate Migration & Displacement," the Church invites reflection and action, urging congregations to see climate-displaced persons not as statistics, but as our neighbours.

The policy on climate-induced migration, is a concrete expression of the Church's commitment to ecological mission. It represents not only theological reflection, but advocacy: a call for public policy that responds justly to those forced from their homes by rising seas, extreme weather, and environmental degradation. Conference participants were invited to engage, critique, and discern, as feedback was being sought from Synods and Rohe ahead of final approval.

Alongside climate work, the Conference also considered important governance and stewardship questions. Key agenda papers included a Connexional Property Strategy Progress Report, showing how the Church is intentionally discerning how its resources – its buildings, land, and properties – can serve mission rather than simply maintain heritage. There was also a Responsible Investment Policy, recently updated, underscoring the Church's commitment to align its financial practices with its moral and spiritual values.

Another area of deep reflection was the statistical reporting of the Church itself. A discussion paper on the "Purpose and Efficacy of Our Statistical Reporting" challenges how the Church counts itself: how it tracks attendance, membership, and participation, and how these metrics can better reflect the real life and vitality of Methodist communities. This is not about bureaucratic number-crunching, but about understanding who we are, how we are growing or shrinking, and what that means for mission.

Social justice is also a heartbeat of Methodist identity, and this was evident in the work of the Methodist Alliance, which unites the Church's mission-oriented arms – its trusts, missions, and parishes – under a shared vision for a just and inclusive society. The Alliance continues to run vital community services: from social work, early childhood education, and mental health support, to affordable housing, addiction services, and elder care. Their work is rooted in the conviction that the Gospel demands transformation in society, not just for individuals, but across systems.

Interfaith engagement also received attention in Conference discussions. The Methodist Church's mission and ecumenical board has long promoted interfaith relations and religious

diversity, fostering partnerships and mutual understanding across faiths in Aotearoa. This work is increasingly urgent in a plural society, and the Conference affirmed its support for continuing to walk with others, even in theological difference, in service of peace, compassion, and justice.

The ordination of new ministers was another highlight. The Conference included services and ceremonies to welcome newly ordained leaders into full connexion, affirming their call to preach, to lead, and to shepherd Methodist people in a time of challenge and change. These moments are always deeply symbolic in Methodist life: a handing-on of the mantle, and a renewal of the Church's ministry for the coming year. Throughout the week, worship and prayer centred the life of the Church, especially in relation to its mission.

Delegates engaged in Covenant service, times of remembering the faithfully departed, and times of discerning the future. There was both celebration and struggle: celebration of what God has done through the Methodist people, and honest wrestling with where the Church needs to grow. We reflected and made some difficult decisions related to Wesley College. We look carefully to an external review process that we hope will bring transformative, life-affirming change for the college, church and community.

In reflecting on Conference 2025, several themes emerge clearly. First, the theme of transformation – “sacred transformation” – is more than rhetoric: it is being lived out in substantial policy work, in how the Church invests and owns property, and in how it counts its people. Second, ecological justice is not peripheral, but central: Methodists in Aotearoa are engaging seriously with climate change, not just as an environmental issue, but as a human, spiritual, and communal calling. Third, social justice and service remain foundational: the Methodist Alliance continues to model Methodist theology in action, standing alongside vulnerable communities. And finally, connection – to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, to other faiths, to the stories of the Pacific, and to one another – is driving forward the Church's mission.

Conference 2025 feels like a turning point: a gathering not just to govern, but to reimagine. Through the work agreed, debated, and prayed over in Otepoti, Dunedin, the Methodist Church of New Zealand is seeking to embody God's aroha in a world that desperately needs sacred transformation.



VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Spirit Guiding MCNZ to be a Church of Movement; Not Maintenance

Rev Peter Norman, MCNZ Vice President

At Christmas we remember that God's aroha is not distant or abstract. Christ comes to dwell with us and among us, in our relationships, our communities, our hopes, and our shared life as Te Hāhi. It is this same incarnate aroha that continues to reshape us, guide us, and call us forward into God's unfolding future.

As the pōhutukawa bursts into colour we are reminded how transformation often begins quietly and blooms unexpectedly. Sometimes grace takes root on windswept cliffs; sometimes hope grows in the cracks of ordinary life. And in its own gentle way, that image has echoed throughout our year as Te Hāhi, where small blossoms of courage, kindness, and renewal appeared in surprising places.

As 2025 draws to a close, we pause to breathe — to listen for the gentle whisper of God's aroha moving through our communities, our whenua, and our shared life as Te Hāhi. This has been a year of sacred transformation: a year of reweaving relationships, rediscovering our Wesleyan soul in an Aotearoa rhythm, and daring to trust that the Spirit is still calling us forward. We have seen courage in our parishes and missions, in the work of redress and reconciliation, and in the growing conviction that property as mission is not just strategy but

gospel — places becoming taonga once more, serving neighbourhoods with creativity, hospitality, and hope.

This movement of aroha felt especially present at our annual Conference, where sacred transformation revealed itself not as an idea but as a lived reality — found in honest conversations, searching evaluations, and a willingness to reshape ourselves for mission, justice, and hope. We took seriously the challenges before us: climate justice, the complex needs of our communities, the stories behind our statistics, and the future of Wesley College. Again and again, the Spirit's invitation was unmistakable: to be a Church not of maintenance, but of movement.

Part of that movement this year involved looking more deeply at our foundations. Alongside our Conference discernment, we acknowledged He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī in our Vision Statement. As Moana Jackson reminded us, it affirmed hapū as "independent entities" choosing to live in "relationships of independence and interdependence." Its declaration — ko mātou, ko mātou anō te kāwanatanga o tō mātou whenua — prepared the way for Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Remembering this covenantal whakapapa helps us walk forward with humility, honesty, and integrity.

This year also stretched us to read scripture with renewed courage. Insights from the Stolen (Is)lands reflection challenged us to see how our sacred texts have sometimes been used to justify harm — and invited us to reclaim readings rooted in whenua, fonua, vanua; readings that honour reciprocity, restoration, and the dignity of people and place. Instead of old conquest imaginations, we are learning to breathe theology that gives life, heals relationships, and strengthens justice.

Another gift this year was rediscovering the common breath that binds us across cultures and oceans. This shared breath of the Spirit is what held us together at Conference, reminding us that transformation is carried on the wind of God — gentle, persistent, and wide as the Pacific itself.

One of the quiet miracles of Conference was witnessing how the Spirit moves without restriction, even across screens. Our technical team worked with extraordinary skill, transforming distance into connection. Technology became a vessel of aroha — holding each voice, each story, each prayer with care. It reminded us again that the wairua cannot be confined: whether gathered in Ōtepoti or joining from afar, we experienced ourselves as one body woven through many threads — Māori, Pākehā, Pasefika, Asian, migrant, rangatahi, kaumātua, ministers, and laity — all responding to Christ with humility and hope. The unity, goodwill, and grace of our people were among this year's greatest blessings.

Beyond the formal gatherings, we saw aroha at work in everyday life: small, ordinary miracles reminding us that the heart of our faith is not grand gestures but daily faithfulness.

And so, we come again to Christmas — to the quiet Bethlehem story where God's aroha took flesh, not in dominance or perfection, but in vulnerability: a child born among the ordinary, in a world longing for peace. That same love continues to take flesh among us today — wherever compassion rises, wherever forgiveness mends, wherever strangers become whānau, wherever justice is carried gently but decisively into places of hurt.

This year also reminded us that climate displacement is not an abstract matter but a human story — the lived reality of our Pacific relatives, of families losing whenua, identity, and home. Our commitment to climate justice is therefore a commitment to people, to communities, and to the vulnerable Christ-child in every place where uncertainty has settled.

As we turn toward 2026, may the aroha we experienced this year — the courage, the candour, the unity, the generosity of spirit — continue to shape our steps. May the pōhutukawa remind us to bloom boldly, beautifully, and unexpectedly — offering shade, strength, and joy to all who gather beneath our branches. And may we continue to listen for the whisper of God's aroha calling us toward a future marked by service, justice, and sacred transformation.



Conference affirmed:

- The establishment of a working group known as Te Amorangi ki Mua, to consider partnership issues including partnership structure, stationing and ministry.
- That the Church includes the amendment to the Mission Statement with reference to He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirenī, the Declaration of Independence 1835.
- That the Church acknowledge the significance of Mangungu and 12 February 1840, with an annual commemoration day and annual funding to support festivities at Mangungu commemorating this day.
- The importance of work undertaken in spiritual wellbeing in 2025 by Revs Setaita K. Veikune and Mary Caygill. Future responsibility and development of this work will come within the mandate of Te Hāpai Ō Ki Muri, managed by the Kai Hāpai in consultation with Trinity Methodist Theological College.
- Appreciation of the contribution Norman Brookes has made to the work of the Wesley Historical Society.
- The dedicated service over the past 10 years of Rev. Prof Dr. Nāsili Vaka'uta, outgoing Principal of Trinity Theological College. Associate Prof. Dr. Emily Colgan was appointed as acting Principal for Trinity Theological College for 2026.
- The 18 years of service, support and guidance Rev Ali'itasi Aoina-Salesa has given to the wider Connexion, including 10 years as Chaplain to Wesley College. Rev Ieremia Amani was welcomed as the Chaplain to Wesley College from 2026.
- Gratitude and thanks to the Wesley College Trust Board members for their dedication and service. Following meaningful discernment, Conference dissolved the existing Board to allow for an external review and reconstitution of the Board. MCNZ President, Te Aroha Rountree, will act as the Interim Wesley College Trust Board with guidance and resourcing from the Vice President and General Secretary.
- The General Secretary will initiate an external review and a transition process towards the re-establishment of Wesley College Trust Board. Suggested decisions will be presented to Tauīwi Strategy & Hui Pōari for consideration and decision by 31 Jan 2026.
- Luisa Fuimaono to the role of Kai Hāpai Rangatahi. Synods, Rohe, Parishes and Connexional groups are encouraged to work collaboratively with Luisa to strengthen the Church's commitment to nurturing and empowering young people of Te Hāhi Weteriana.
- The Year of Discernment programme will be discontinued. Candidates will be supported with the transition into the new model with structured guidance and mentoring.
- Gratitude to Paerata Rise for a \$350,000 contribution to the Social Housing Fund.
- Disability inclusion as an ongoing Connexional priority. A Disability Inclusion Blueprint - based on the outcomes of the 2025 Disability Wānanga and the "Big Church, Small Church" strategy - will be finalised by Nov 2026.
- The combining of the Northland Synod, Auckland Synod and Manukau Synod into the Northern Synod. Rev Uesifili Unasa was appointed as Northern Synod Superintendent.



The Evolution of a New Northern Methodist Synod

Usefili Unsa

Following the COVID pandemic, the Tauwi Strategy Meeting in March 2023 began to address the challenges faced by its parishes and ministries. The outcome has been an amalgamation of three North Islands Synods into one.

Chief amongst the long-standing challenges identified at that March 2023 meeting were declining congregation membership, spiralling church properties maintenance costs and the widening disconnect between faith and everyday life.

The Tauwi meeting began to think about having a connexional overview, a broader strategy and vision that looked at the whole picture rather than a specific parish or Synod. It asked: *How and where do we take time to dream and do the thinking about future church, relevant for 21st Century Aotearoa, relevant for Tauwi, relevant for each Synod, relevant for the whole? Have we made the structure of the Church a barrier? Are our current Tauwi structures fit for purpose?*

The strategic work was followed up by the Synod Superintendent's Retreat held in July, led by Tauwi Facilitators Revs Nicola Teague Grundy and Uesifili Unasa, where each Synod shared their strategic plans. These plans were premised on the questions:

Do we all have strategic plans and what process did we undertake in developing them? Where are the commonalities? Where are the differences? Are there areas we can work together on? Can we form a Tauwi strategy?

Part of this Tauwi work culminated in the formation of the Northern Methodist Synod from the former Synods of Northland, Auckland and Manukau. Led by President Te Aroha Rountree and Vice President Rev Peter Norman, the Inaugural Service of the Northern Methodist Synod and the Induction of the Rev Uesifili Unasa as Synod Superintendent, was held on the Sunday 23 November in the Takapuna Methodist Church.



CONTACT DETAILS

I welcome your feedback on content included in this publication.

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***Wishing all our readers Meri Kirihimete
me te Hape Nū Ia
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.***



Kawhia Commemorations

Kawhia awoke on Sunday, 16 November 2025, to the kind of calm, golden morning that seems designed for celebration. This particular Sunday service, promised to be especially meaningful.

From early light, the township carried a sense of expectancy. Cars pulled quietly into the gravel carpark overlooking the harbour, the sound of

greetings and laughter drifting toward the sea breeze. It was the anniversary of Kawhia Methodist Church—a treasured gathering place, a wāhi tapu of stories, struggle, and steadfast faith.

The church, humble in its white weatherboard frame, has stood for generations as a spiritual home for the people of Kawhia and the wider rohe. For local families, the anniversary is more than a date on a calendar; it marks the endurance of whakapono, the weaving together of Māori and Tauīwi traditions, and the ongoing journey of a community committed to living out its faith with compassion and courage.

As parishioners filtered in, the sanctuary filled with the familiar blend of voices—elderly kaumatua finding their usual seats, young families shepherding tamariki toward the front, and returning whānau who had travelled from Hamilton, Auckland, and further afield to join the occasion. The church's stained-glass windows cast gentle colour across the wooden pews, a subtle reminder of all the faces that had gathered there before.

The service began with Rev Keita Hotere acknowledging those who had gathered from Waikato-Waiariki Synod, from Tāmaki Rohe and the mana whenua of Te Rohe Potae, those who were busy making final preparations in the kitchen, as well as those who would participate in the proceedings of the day.

The kauwhau centred on the theme **He Atua pai, he hāhi ora**. Drawing from the image of Kawhia Harbour—a place of rich Whakapapa and encounter with the Gospel. “We gather today in the embrace of God’s goodness, in the presence of our tūpuna who walked this land before us, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit who breathes life into the Church still today,” was the opening reflection, and continued with the rumination “Today is more than a celebration of a building; it is a celebration of a journey — a haerenga of faith woven through whakapapa, covenant, and grace. Kāwhia Methodist Church stands as a living witness to God’s faithfulness: *He Atua pai, he hāhi ora*. A good God, a living church.”

For many, the church is inseparable from the most significant moments of our lives.

One of the service’s most powerful moments came during the thanksgiving liturgy. Members of the congregation were invited to stand and share brief memories or acknowledgments. A kuia spoke of learning her first prayers in the church as a child. A middle-aged father expressed gratitude for the youth leaders who had guided him decades earlier—and who now guide his own children. A young woman, recently welcomed into the congregation, spoke of finding belonging and acceptance at a time when she felt adrift.

These testimonies illuminated the living history of the church—its influence not confined to the past, but alive in the present and shaping the future.

Following the service, the celebrations continued in classic Kawhia fashion: a community lunch on the lawn, complete with homemade baking, pūhā and pork, fry bread, salads, and enough

cups of tea to satisfy every visitor. Children played under the pōhutukawa trees as adults mingled, shared stories, and caught up with old friends.

President Rountree moved easily among the crowd, offering warm conversation, blessings, and encouragement. Many took the opportunity to thank her personally for her leadership during a complex period of social change in Aotearoa. Her responses were characteristically humble, always turning attention back to the strength of community.

As the afternoon sun began to soften, a small group gathered at the church's entrance for a photo—leaders, kaumātua, tamariki, long-time members, and visitors. The image captured more than a moment; it captured generations standing together in gratitude.

The anniversary of Kawhia Methodist Church was not simply a commemoration, but a celebration of identity, relationship, and enduring faith. The service led by President Te Aroha Rountree reminded all who attended that the heart of the church is not its building, but its people—those who love, serve, and believe together.

In the quiet afterwards, as the harbour returned to its familiar stillness, one truth remained clear: the legacy of this church continues to ripple outward, and its future is bright with promise.



AROUND THE CONNEXION



Parish Share Warmth and Hospitality with Homeless Community

Rev Suiva'aia Te'o

Wesley Wellington Parish opened its doors and its heart to host a special community lunch for those experiencing homelessness in the city. It was a beautiful gathering of compassion, hospitality, and shared humanity.

More than 75 men and women came through the doors of our newly renovated hall.. Every person was welcomed with warmth, dignity, and respect.

Parish Superintendent, Rev Joeli Ducivaki offered a heartfelt welcome to all present, and I led a prayer of blessing for the gathering — giving thanks for every life represented in the room and for the food lovingly prepared by members of the parish.

The meal reflected the richness of our multicultural church whānau: parishioners arrived with trays and pots of food, and then stayed to serve, sit, and share in genuine fellowship with our guests. Everyone ate well and many were able to take extra food home for dinner — a small act that carried great meaning.

A further expression of care came through thoughtful sanitary gift parcels, prepared mainly by our Fijian Women's Group and received with deep gratitude. For many, this simple gesture was a reminder that they are not forgotten — that someone has taken the time to think of their wellbeing.

During the lunch, a particularly touching moment occurred when one of the women from the homeless community stood to speak. She thanked the parish from her heart for the meal, the hospitality, and the kindness shown. She then gifted the gathering with a beautiful waiata '*Te Aroha ...*' her voice filling the hall with grace and reminding us all of the deep humanity we share. It was a moving moment that brought many to quiet reflection.

As the lunch came to a close, there was a sense that something meaningful had taken place — not just a meal shared, but lives touched and hope rekindled. Several guests asked about Sunday service times, expressing a genuine desire to return and be part of the worshipping community. What unfolded in our hall was more than an event; it was a glimpse of God's kingdom — where hospitality becomes healing, compassion becomes connection, and love is shared freely at the table.



Advent Box Outreach Brings Christmas Cheer

St Andrew's Centre has been spreading Christmas joy through their local Waiuku community for the past 12 years with creative Advent Boxes displayed in shop windows in the weeks before Christmas.

The gift-wrapped boxes, each containing a unique diorama, created by talented members of the congregation, are distributed in late November to participating businesses. From 1 December, over a two-week period in the lead up to Christmas, one gift box is unwrapped daily at noon, to reveal a hand-crafted, Gospel inspired, Christmas scene. At each opening, members of the St Andrews Centre congregation gather on the street outside the display window to sing carols. The date and time for 'unwrapping' is displayed alongside each Advent Box.

Anisha Santhoshkumar, Senior Parish Lead, St Andrews Centre (Waiuku and Districts Combined Churches), has been administering the Advent Box project for the past four years. She admits that although 'there is a huge amount of work behind the scenes', the project brings joy and a simple spirit of Christmas to all the individuals and businesses involved, and to the wider community.

"Daily at noon a bell rings and the Town Crier announces that a box is about to be opened as we gather in the pavement outside the premises to sing a carol," Anisha says. "Sometimes random passersby stop to join in the singing or just to listen."

The advent boxes will stay on display in each venue until the week after Christmas when they will be collected and returned to the creators. Every year a theme is chosen to spark the imagination of the person designing the diorama. Past themes have included *Christmas around the World*, *Christmas Symbols*, *New Zealand Christmas*, and *The 12 Days of Christmas*. This year the theme is *Christmas Carols*.

The first Advent Box project was rolled out in 2013 and over the years every banana box reinvented and reimagined to contain an inspired advent scene has been a way of bringing the joy and authenticity of Christmas to the community.

"We sing real Christmas carols that speak of peace, hope, and simplicity. It reminds people of the true heart of Christmas," Anisha says.

"Each box opening is a special moment of joy and community, and we want everyone to have the opportunity to be part of it. As God opens the space, we have to extend ourselves and hold it for one another. Each box is unique and special, reminding us that God's creativity is reflected in each of us and in the communities we build together."



Wesley Students Awarded Scholarships

At the recent Wesley College prizegiving, six students destined for careers in medicine and architecture, were awarded scholarships worth more than \$100,000. Principal Brian Evans praised the students for their efforts.

"These young people have really gone above and beyond in their studies this year. It's incredibly impressive; I couldn't be prouder," Dr Evans said.

Cedric Laveti-Waqa was awarded an Otago University Scholarship which includes accommodation and \$17,5000 towards tuition fees. He will study health science next year with the aim of becoming an orthopaedic surgeon.

Lucky Lu'au was awarded the Remuera Rotary Scholarship which pays her tuition fees for a year, to the value of \$10,000. She is aiming to become a medical imager because she wants to "help the community" and understands the shortage in the health sector.

Moeata Ngataki and Akesa Sosefo were awarded the University of Auckland Waka Moana Scholarship which covers their accommodation fees for their first year of study.

Moeata, was also named Proxime Accessit, and was awarded a First Foundation Scholarship which are awarded to the first student in a family to go to university. That provides \$4000 each year for three years towards tuition fees, mentoring and paid work experience at Counties Energy. She will study for a conjoint degree in global studies and commerce.

Akesa Sosefo was awarded the University of Auckland Vaka Moana Scholarship, valued at up to \$23,000, comprising one year of catered accommodation and a laptop. Akesa will be studying to become a nurse.

Mosese Kailea was awarded the University of Auckland Pacific Academic Excellence which includes \$20,000 towards tuition fees over three years, and accommodation, however he is planning to head to Australia to study architecture at Bond University on the Gold Coast in their accelerated two-year programme.

Catherine Anitoni was awarded the Zonta Leadership Emerging Leader Award for Year 12 Girls. Oceana Vaili was named Dux.

On the same day as the prizegiving, the school's multi-million-dollar landscaping project was blessed and officially opened. The area features substantial landscaping, seating, plantings, an amphitheatre with shade sails over it, a new astroturf basketball court, a stage and a large covered outdoor dining area.

As the school is redeveloped, the outdoor leisure area will become the central heart and hub of the school.



Manaaki whenua, manaaki tangata

Rev Dr Arapera Ngaha

High on the Whirinaki skyline, the Methodist Church stands as a sentinel, watching over the sacred wāhi tapu Pukekōkōu, and the rolling farmlands that cradle Mōria Marae. Built in 1907, this church was a gesture of faith and generosity. Te Tuhi Heretini, landowner and Methodist Home Missionary, gifted this land to the MCNZ, believing it would serve the spiritual and cultural needs of Māori communities for generations.

For decades, the church fulfilled that purpose. Though he gifted the land to the Wesleyan Church around 1902, the legal transfer took many years to complete. By 1931, Te Tuhi reaffirmed his gift before the Court, and in 1932 the land was formally vested in the Methodist Home Mission and Church Extension Investment Funds Board. Four acres were given to the Church, while two acres were placed under the Māori Trustee. These lands were more than assets; they were taonga, held for the flourishing of faith among Māori Methodists. As time passed, this whenua was brought under the care of Te Taha Māori Property Trust—a new chapter in stewardship and responsibility. Yet, the story of Whirinaki was far from over.

Te Tuhi passed away in 1933, but the church built on this land stood as a beacon of faith and community. Despite remaining in Whirinaki for most of his life, Te Tuhi was able to exercise considerable influence not only in Hokianga but in the wider Māori Methodist ministry. His son Rev Eru Te Tuhi was stationed to Whirinaki for many years until he was promoted and stationed to Dargaville, serving the wider Methodist Māori Mission.

On Saturday 18 October descendants of Heretini Te Tuhi, Te Taha Māori and the wider South Hokianga community of Whirinaki gathered to witness the return of the Whirinaki Methodist church and whenua to the Te Tuhi Heretini Trust. The day began with a pōwhiri on to Mōria marae followed by a karakia held in the Whirinaki Methodist church, and hakāri back at the marae.

President Te Aroha Rountree delivered the sermon emphasising how faith, honouring whakapapa and dedication to community were inherent in this gift. It was a day of celebration, honouring whakapapa, whānau connections and a community of faith. There were many stories shared by the wider Te Tuhi whānau, descendants of Heretini Te Tuhi and the wider community, stories that illustrated the close-knit community who had grown up in this valley. Many stories, however, may never be told because the carriers of those narratives have passed. For us, as Kaitiaki and people of restoration we understand whenua has always carried deep meaning for Māori whānau and for Church. It is more than soil and buildings, and it is a place where faith, whānau, and connection took root in Whirinaki and nurtured community.

Since 1989, James Henare Te Tuhi, grandson of Heretini, wrote tirelessly to the Methodist Church, seeking the return of the land his grandfather had given. His letters carried a deep yearning for justice and restoration. After years of debate and researching Māori Land Court records, the decision was made: the land would go back to the original donor's whānau. It was no longer serving its original purpose and returning it was the right thing to do.

In 2019, the Heretini Te Tuhi Trust was created, with trustees drawn from the direct descendants of the original donor. Five years later, in 2024, the trust was renamed Te Tuhi Heretini Trust—a name that honors both the man and the legacy. As kaitiaki of the land, we acknowledge our duty: to restore what was given when we no longer use it for its intended purpose (Land Commission Report to Conference 1989).

With deep regret, we also remember James Henare Te Tuhi, who passed before seeing this gift returned. Nā reira, moe mai rā e te rangatira, moe mai i te aiōtanga o te Atua.



Lucille on the Move; Farewell and Thank You

Lucille Havenga, Executive Assistant to the General Secretary, Tara Tautari, recently announced her imminent departure. A new job opportunity for Lucille's husband in Perth will see the family move to the west coast of Australia.

Lucille has been a highly valued and cherished member of the Connexional team since she started as receptionist in July 2019. Always calm, warm, kind, conscientious and knowledgeable, Lucille has brought much more than professionalism and expertise to each of the roles she has performed over the past six years.

Her innate ability to 'hold space for others', allow them to be seen and to calmly and competently go about taking care of business has endeared her to every person she has interacted with, regardless of their position, age, gender or ethnicity.

When Tara stood to extend her message of thanks and farewell on behalf of the team gathered, she paused and then said, "I haven't prepared anything for Lucille; it is not something I have wanted to think about."

She went on to say, "I am not sure when I first met Lucille. She has always just been there. Not like a piece of furniture, but as a part of my consciousness. A part of my thinking."

"Her gift is her wairua. She is always reading the room. She sees everyone and this is evident in every interaction she has; in the office, in her phone conversations, at Conference."

Tara said, "Your ability to be with all people goes far beyond cultural competency. It speaks of the love, the aroha you have for all people."

Caitlin Griffiths has worked closely alongside Lucille over recent months and will take over the role as Tara's EA.



REFLECTION



"Let every heart prepare him/her room."

Rev Dr Mary Caygill

I feel the challenge each Advent, as to how I will, in my mind and heart, prepare to make room for the Christ to come afresh. I experience this feeling, no matter how well acquainted I am with the traditions and stories that will be central to the Advent journey culminating in the feast of Christmas.

So, my offering and invitation for Advent exploration and journeying, through an engagement with eight practices that help me in the slowing down, taking a breath, the paying of attention, and the making of room in my, in our lives for the birth of the Holy

I don't offer these practices to you as a shopping list of yet more tasks to complete as the days race by, but rather, ways in which your own thoughts and prayerful responses may be enlarged, and thus the expansiveness of the room within, we make preparation for.

Firstly, the practice of what can be called **Interrupting** – breaking the flow of habitual patterns can prompt new kinds of noticing and stimulate awareness. At least once a week throughout December, or you might find it helpful to manage once a day, practice difference, welcome surprise.

Take a route to work, school, the doing of daily tasks – the visiting of the supermarket – using a different route that you may never have used before. What do I see? What is it that I notice and become aware of? **Or** – take a walk in a place, or at a time that is not the norm for you and again pay attention, noticing details of colour, movement, shape before words and labels start to fill your head. **Or** – wear your watch on the “wrong wrist, or not at all. Every time you look at the time and feel the interruption of automatic behaviour, turn your attention to God's presence in the here and now.

Secondly – Silencing – How about attempting to schedule a fixed time each day – say between one and 10 minutes for wordless silence in the presence of God. Unplug yourself from all media one day a week, or at least for a morning, afternoon, or evening. Pay attention to how your inner being – your soul – wants to use that quiet time.

Thirdly – Waiting – Make every experience of waiting in the routine of your day a time of prayerful attention to the hope and desire within you. What are all the things I am waiting for? But what am I *really* waiting for?

Fourthly – Listening – when you are out and about, pause and close your eyes sometimes. What do you hear? Make those sounds the subject of a prayer. Spend time each day in a place of stillness where you can listen to your heart and listen for God. In conversations with family, friends, or stranger, listen for what wants to be heard.

Fifthly – Watching – and this is my discipline to achieve this Advent – rise one morning to watch night turn to day. Maybe pick a day when you watch both the sunrise and the sunset, from a viewpoint that is unusual to you. Or notice the faces of strangers. Can you see in them icons of the holy?

Sixthly – Loving – Practice random acts of kindness. Think and bring to your mind's eye who or what this might be. Pray that you may be a sign of Christ to everyone you meet. Pray for the person who may be the hardest for you. Whenever you are in a public space, spend time praying for everyone you see around you. For one day, or at least one hour, make a conscious act of seeing Christ in every face.

Seventh – Giving – do something to make more justice and peace. Send money to a cause that is working for peace and justice. Take something to a food bank or give to someone who can do that for you. Make a change in your own way of living that will be a vote for “A new heaven and a new earth.” What is it that I can do/be tangibly to “prepare the way of the Lord?”

Eighthly – Receiving – Pay attention. Stay awake. Be ready. Open the door of your heart to welcome the stranger who seeks to make dwelling within.

Amid this Advent season of preparation – how am I seeking to make room in my, in our lives for the birth of the Holy. Let us be open to heed the call.