



Coming Together in a Spirit of Cooperation

On Pentecost Sunday, Kosipeli Tongan Methodist Church, Christchurch, hosted guests from Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, foreign affairs staff, diplomats, and UN appointed personnel to a service and celebration lunch.

The service set a tone of reconciliation, camaraderie and a willingness to be open to the power of the Holy Spirit in preparation for a week of high-level negotiations, focused on Bougainville's future political status, held at Burnham Military Camp.

There has been ongoing consultation between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) to give effect to Bougainville's call for independence. In 2019 Bougainvilleans voted overwhelmingly to seek independence from Papua New Guinea with more than 97 per cent in favour of independence. The referendum result has yet to be ratified by PNG's parliament. Former New Zealand governor general, Sir Jerry Mateparae has been appointed independent moderator for the latest round of consultations. As a long-time friend and former army colleague, Kosipeli Presbyter Rev Tavake Manu – previously an army chaplain – was asked to host the delegation at the parish for the Sunday service.

Sir Jerry has been engaged in the PNG and Bougainville region's affairs since 1998 when he was commander of the truce monitoring group in Bougainville. At that time, he played a leading role as a mediator in negotiations for a permanent ceasefire between Bougainville and PNG following the end of a ten-year conflict. In September last year Sir Jerry was selected by the PNG government and ABG to mediate ongoing negotiations and in November he travelled to Bougainville, along with UN officials, to meet key stakeholders. Many of those people travelled to Christchurch from Port Moresby and will be involved in negotiations that are aimed at resolving Bougainville's future political status.

After the service, a celebration luncheon was held in a superbly decorated hall adjacent to the chapel. Under the guidance of Rev Tavake's wife Temaleti, the parish catering team worked through the night to ensure the buffet tables were laden with food that represented the tastes of the hosts and their guests. Platters of Tongan specialties included roasted suckling pigs, kumara, taro, bronzed shrimp, seafood wrapped in taro leaves and octopus steeped in coconut milk. In post banquet speeches, interspersed with outstanding singing from guests and their hosts, Sir Jerry commented on the many connections between all those assembled, and the sharing of faith and hospitality that reflected their Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian heritage and influences.

"The service has laid the foundation for the work ahead," he said as he extended his thanks to the parish for the sumptuous lunch and applauded both the children's and adult choirs for their outstanding singing.

"The Tongan Choir almost lifted the roof off the church, and I am glad it fell back down again," he said, referring to the near zero-degree temperatures and wind chill factor that tested the fortitude of the locals, as well as the guests many of whom were used to year-round tropical temperatures.

During the service Stephanie Elijah, Secretary for the Department of Independence Mission implementation ABG, led the Bougainville guests in a traditional song of praise. Stephanie was one of 24 representatives from Bougainville that included President Ishmael Toroama and Vice President Patrick Nisira along with other government officials. Stephanie confirmed that relations between the two groups involved in negotiations were cordial, and all were committed to the ongoing moderation process to endorse the results of the referendum.

"The governments have yet to agree as to how to translate and accept our call for independence in national parliament and establish a future relationship as two separate countries. The process is not defined in constitution so that requires the two governments to negotiate the process. We are all on the same side but we are working out the details and that is a long process."

The visiting group included more than 50 diplomats and government officials from Bougainville and PNG including the Prime Minister of PNG James Marape and New Zealand High Commissioner to PNG Peter Zwart. This is the third time Burnham has hosted negotiations since peace talks were first brokered in 1997. In a statement issued on 5 June, Foreign Minister Winston Peters, said,

"New Zealand looks forward to welcoming parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement back to Burnham - 28 years after we last hosted peace talks there."

"Our involvement is to provide the venue and environment necessary for substantive discussions on Bougainville's political future.

"Reaching a mutually agreed outcome is important for Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, and the wider region, as is upholding the integrity of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, to which New Zealand is a witnessing signatory."



VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



TŪHONO I TE AO HURIHURI

Rev. Peter Norman, Vice President, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa

I have participated recently in two ecumenical gatherings in Tāmaki Makaurau, as well as a gathering of the Methodist whānau. Each occasion, rich with prayer, song, kai, and kōrero, stirred something deep within me.

Not nostalgia or duty, but a genuine longing: to reconnect. To tūhono. To reimagine what it

means to be Church in Aotearoa — here, now, and with open hearts.

What I witnessed wasn't just heartfelt worship. It was a shared yearning across traditions and tikanga — not only for institutional survival, but for the spiritual and social wellbeing of our communities — our hāpori — across the motu. And that kind of unity doesn't demand sameness. It calls for commitment, courage, and manaakitanga — a hospitality that uplifts the mana of all. It felt like something deeper was being stirred — a call not just to gather, but to live the gospel anew in this time of change. A call to widen the table, centre the margins, and walk the path of justice — not as an abstract ideal, but as a living practice rooted in wairua and community. And so, these ancient words come alive again — not only spoken by Jesus in Nazareth, but now whispered in our own breath and context:

The Spirit of Life is upon us —
To bring good news that liberates and heals,
To awaken hope where the world has grown weary,
To declare release for those held down — by poverty, injustice, or despair,
To open eyes — not just to see, but to see with compassion,
To walk with the wounded, honour the overlooked, and breathe life into justice,
To proclaim with courage and aroha:
Now is the time —
The season of sacred turning,
The year of Jubilee,
The dawn of divine embrace. (Based on Luke 4:18–19)

Spirit as Breath, Wind, and Wild Grace

Our understanding of God is not fading — it's deepening. We affirm God not as a distant ruler, but as Divine Presence who animates all things.

In te ao Māori, wairua speaks of spiritual essence and sacred connection, while mauri is the life force — the energy that flows through and sustains all living things. In ancient Hebrew, the Spirit — ruach — is breath, wind, and generative power. And in the New Testament, the Greek word pneuma carries these same meanings: spirit, wind, breath — invisible yet vital, always in motion, always giving life. Across Indigenous wisdom and Christian tradition — including voices like Howard Thurman, a theologian, mystic, and guide to the US civil rights movement — we find shared knowing: that the sacred is not separate from creation, but alive within it. Spirit is not a concept to be defined, but a living presence to be encountered — relational, dynamic, and deeply woven into the fabric of the world.

What Is the Church, Really?

As described in an earlier article, the Church is less like a glass cabinet of pristine doctrine and more like the mug cupboard — mismatched, chipped, well-worn, diverse, and each one unique — full of stories and soul. It's time we open that cupboard wide. In a community like ours, the Spirit doesn't wait for uniformity. She moves through difference — doctrinal, cultural, generational, neurodiverse — knitting us into a mosaic of grace.

We are not simply a denomination.

We are a covenantal movement — grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the whenua, shaped by bicultural partnership, woven into te taiao, inspired by ecumenical hope, sustained by global and Pacific connections, and committed to the flourishing of communities — here and everywhere. Our identity is not static; it is relational, evolving, and Spirit-led.

We are called not to compete, but to collaborate.
Not to control, but to co-create.

Prophetic Presence in a Divided Time

In recent days, a public protest by Destiny Church in Auckland — involving the desecration of flags representing diverse faiths and communities — was met with widespread condemnation as “not Kiwi, nor Christian” and “vile rhetoric.” Temples, mosques, synagogues, churches, marae, and community spaces all reflect the spiritual whānau and cultural diversity of Aotearoa. They do essential work not only sustaining the wellbeing of all peoples — but also adding to the vibrancy, trust, and resilience of our shared life.

These actions breached our values of manaakitanga and communal flourishing. They call us not simply to denounce, but to respond with Spirit-led hospitality, restorative dialogue, and active accompaniment. As we walk in the way of Jesus, our faith calls us to stand alongside the vulnerable, the marginalised, and those wounded by hate — not with silence or slogans, but with courageous, loving presence.



One Word that Changed a Life

On 23 April Cardinal John Dew flew to Rome to attend the funeral of Pope Francis and participate in the conclave to elect the next Pope. He shares a significant moment in an age-old ritual.

One word. One word, which changed the life of one cardinal. I knew I was going to hear a word – one word only – but I still waited with bated breath to hear it. There had already been immediate applause as we cardinals counted the votes in the ballot on the afternoon of 8 May. As it became clear that Cardinal Robert Prevost had enough votes to

become the new Bishop of Rome, the applause that filled the Sistine Chapel was as deafening as it was enthusiastic. When Cardinal Prevost was formally told that he had been elected, he was asked if he accepted the will of the gathered Cardinals.

Then came the one word: “Accepto.”

I found it a very powerful moment. This man was one of us; yet, to me, it was very clear that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. With that one word, he was prepared for his life to be dramatically changed. He knew that this was to be his way from then on – to give his life in love and in service, both to the Church and the wider world. With humility and gratitude, he accepted a calling which meant that his whole life would be public and would never be the same again. Pope Leo’s “accepto” calls us to pray for him and support him daily with our prayers. He is a man of deep holiness. Indeed, his knowledge of who he is in God’s eyes enabled him to make his acceptance response.

Spirit-filled moments in Rome

I will never forget hearing that one word – “accepto” – but there were several other moments of those days which were also powerful and Spirit-filled. The day of the funeral of Pope Francis, the days of prayerful mourning for him, the fact that 70,000 people visited his tomb the day after his burial; all of these spoke deeply of how much he was loved and respected. Then there were the days leading up to and including the actual conclave. One of the most memorable moments for me was the procession from the Pauline Chapel into the Sistine Chapel for the beginning of the conclave. As we began to move, we also began to join in the singing of the Litany of the Saints. It was a prayerful and a powerful time.

The Litany concluded and was then followed with the singing of *Veni Creator Spiritus*, pleading for the presence and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I was very conscious of the fact that this was not just a matter of writing down a name; we made a solemn oath that we would be voting for the one we truly believed was the man chosen by God. We renewed that oath each time we put our ballot paper into the container, all unfolding in front of Michelangelo’s famous painting of the Last Judgement. This could not be done any way other than prayerfully.

Accompanied in prayer

As 133 of us processed into the Sistine Chapel, accompanied at that stage by the Sistine Chapel Choir, I was filled with gratitude and with the awareness that we were not on our own. The Spirit of God was guiding us, and many millions of people around the world were supporting us.

This is a reduced version of a statement published by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference website on 11 June 2025 and reproduced in *Touchstone* with permission.



Waikato-Waiariki Synod Finds Refreshment and Renewal

Rev John Carr

Members of the Waikato-Waiariki Synod recently gathered for a two-day *Refresh* retreat. *Refresh* offered space to breathe, rest, reflect, reconnect and remember the core of our calling.

Retreat workshops focused on how we might sustain and maintain our churches in these challenging times with ministers

across the motu facing increased demands and rising burnout. Anchored in the wisdom of the Franciscan aphorism - "Remember what is yours to do, and what is yours to let go" - we explored practical ways to lead faithfully without being consumed. These sessions invited honesty about our limits and encouraged a deep trust in God's presence amid uncertainty.

We also delved into the richness of spiritual direction and explored practices that ground and nourish us. Some of the spiritual tools we engaged with included breath prayers—simple phrases prayed in rhythm with our breathing to centre ourselves in God's presence; holy listening—a deep, attentive way of hearing another's story without fixing or interrupting; lectio divina—a slow, reflective reading of Scripture that invites us to listen for God's word to us in the moment; and the examen—a guided reflection on our day to notice where we experienced God's nearness or felt spiritually disconnected. These tools, both ancient and evolving, reminded us that ministry is not a solo journey but one we share in community and with the Spirit.

A highlight of the gathering was learning from Nicola Grundy about the work of Te Hāpai o ki Muri, a new and evolving role in the life of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. As we listened, we began to glimpse how this initiative is shaping change and strengthening the connection across the Connexion.

The retreat also provided an opportunity for fellowship, laughter and reflection as a synod. We were blessed to begin one morning with a devotion led by Margaret Birtles, who spoke powerfully on the theme of transformation; how God's grace gently (and sometimes not-so-gently) shapes us in the work of renewal. Margaret shared her love of butterflies and used the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar to remind us that transformation takes time, patience and often a bit of mess along the way. It was a beautiful, down-to-earth invitation to trust the Spirit's slow and steady work in our lives and ministries.

We left Refresh with ideas and insights, and with hearts lightened, spirits steadied and a renewed sense of our shared calling.



Lifewise Big Sleepout 2025: Raising Urgency, Raising Hope

Lifewise Auckland is inviting prominent community and business leaders to sleep rough for a night to raise funds and awareness for a problem that is a growing crisis in Aotearoa: homelessness.

It's easy to pass judgement on someone sleeping rough — but the truth is, homelessness could happen to any one of us. A single, life-changing event - job loss, business failure, a serious illness, or the breakdown of a relationship - can leave a person without a safe and stable place to live. To help respond to the growing need, on 10 July Lifewise is bringing back their flagship fundraising event, the Big Sleepout, where business and community leaders will spend one night sleeping rough at AUT. They are stepping out of their comfort zones to better understand the reality faced

by many across our city.

The aim is to raise vital funds and spotlight the rising crisis of homelessness in Tamaki Makaurau. Recent data has shown a [53 percent increase](#) in the number of people sleeping rough in Auckland since September.

Homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Growing Crisis

Homelessness is a crisis that is growing in New Zealand. In a nation known for its spirit of community and care for others, it is disheartening to know that an estimated [112,000+ Kiwis are severely housing-deprived](#), an increase from 99,000+ in 2018. The pandemic and rising living costs have worsened the situation, but despite the severity of the issue, many New Zealanders remain disconnected from its harsh realities.

Homelessness is often seen as a distant problem, a statistic that is easy to overlook. Even in a country renowned for its collective spirit, there exists a clear gap between the perception of homelessness and the lived experience of it. Many Kiwis struggle to understand what it is truly like to face homelessness, and the scale of the issue often feels abstract, distant. But behind these numbers are real people - our friends, our neighbours, our whānau - struggling with circumstances beyond their control.

People who are most likely to experience housing deprivation include females, Māori and Pasifika people, children, rangatahi, those with a disability and members of the LGBTIQ+ population. The financial cost of homelessness to the country is staggering, yet for many of us, homelessness remains an invisible problem, often hidden from view or reduced to a headline in the news. This disconnection makes it even harder to address the issue and create meaningful change.

Where the Funds Go

All funds raised will go directly to Lifewise Merge Café & Community. Merge Café serves as a crucial first point of contact for Auckland's street whānau during times of crisis — offering not only hot meals, but also warm, engaging kōrero with our friendly staff and peer support workers. More than just a meal, Merge is a trusted space that helps people access housing, support networks, and the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

You Can Make a Difference

It's powerful to see business and community leaders use their voices, connections, and platforms to champion this critical cause. But real change requires collective effort. Whether it's through donating, spreading the word, or supporting a participant, your involvement can help turn the tide.



He Kura Toi Tangata

Rev Keita Hotere

The exhibition *He Kura Toi Tangata: 50 years of the Waitangi Tribunal 1975 – 2025*, at Wellington Museum, is a powerful retrospective of the Tribunal's work in deepening our understanding and acknowledgement of Te Ao Māori.

God of Justice and Aroha,
We give thanks for courageous voices
speaking truth with dignity and hope.
May our conscience be stirred and deepen our resolve.
There is much that has been done and much more to do.
Shape us in the likeness of your justice
rooted in Te Tiriti o Waitangi,

honoring partnership, right relationships and reconciliation.

Unite Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi in sacred covenant,
moving always toward a just and reconciled Aotearoa.

Recently, I visited Te Waka Huia Wellington Museum and experienced the powerful Waitangi Tribunal exhibition, '**He Kura Toi Tangata: 50 Years of the Waitangi Tribunal**'. The Tribunal is a permanent commission of inquiry that hears Māori claims against the Crown concerning alleged breaches of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The documentary '*Karanga Rā*' featured as part of the exhibition offering a moving retrospective on the Tribunal's work across the past 50 years. It shares the courageous voices of those who carried their grievances before the Tribunal, and the dedicated Tribunal approach to work in a 'crucial, serious, considered and judicial way'. It is a compelling record of the deep pain and determination of Māori communities seeking justice.

Established under the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, the Waitangi Tribunal is rooted in the principles of partnership, reciprocity, and restoration. The Tribunal offers a space where Māori can present claims through oral histories, research, and lived experiences. Recommendations are made to Parliament and while these are not legally binding, they have profoundly shaped New Zealand's legal and political landscape. Tribunal hearings and findings of the reports have influenced Iwi settlements, government policy, and led to a deeper acknowledgement and understanding of Te Ao Māori.

With over 3,000 claims registered and more than 125 inquiries conducted the Tribunal has not only illuminated the injustices of the past but continues to evolve, addressing contemporary issues such as the current WAI 2700 Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry and many of the Bills before Parliament.

In a world fractured by division, the Tribunal stands as a powerful symbol of unity, resilience and restorative justice. As Weteriana, we claim to embody the same vision in our right relationships with one another. As Synods, parishes, Hui Pōari and Rohe we continue to work together in partnership, through consultation and considered decision-making. As we journey toward our Conference in Dunedin, may our hearts and decisions reflect the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Let us move together in a spirit of integrity, faithful partnership between Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi, and a steadfast commitment to a just and reconciled Aotearoa.



A New Future Together? Report of the King's Birthday Weekend UCANZ Biennial Forum

Rev Andrew Doubleday, UCANZ Ministry
Facilitator / Executive Officer

Over King's Birthday Weekend, 74 of us gathered for the UCANZ Biennial Forum at Onehunga Co-operating Parish to respond to that which is both a statement and a question - "Our Future Together".

We were royally hosted by the parish, beautifully led in regular worship by Andrew and Joanne Evans (Anglicans of Matamata), enjoyed amazing food, rich fellowship, and

knuckled down together to engage over the theme of the forum 'Our Future Together'.

Having the right people in the room – a significant tranche of national and regional leaders of all three partner churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican), with a solid representation of CVs (Co-operating Ventures), allowed us get down to the serious business of reflecting together on where we are. The tensions, the less than whole-hearted embrace of CVs and the current UCANZ model, all surfaced. There was an honesty that made it clear that the partners have varying levels of commitment to the ongoing viability of the current model for CVs as a pathway forward. And it was also very clear that while CVs believe in their own life, they have little confidence in the leadership of the partners with relation to CVs.

UCANZ has no power. It was clear that the partners have less than full-throated confidence in UCANZ and the model it operates under. While UCANZ is doing its best to support and resource CVs, we recognise that the power, the authority, and the ability to make real decisions rests with the partners. This capacity is exercised primarily at regional level, which is why we made significant efforts to get Bishops, Executive Officers, and District Superintendents engaged in dialogue with one another, and with the broader CV constituency. That they did engage was a hallmark of the success of the weekend. And it seemed to be conducted in a generous spirit of grace. It was recognised that the future is largely in the hands of the partners.

This is where we landed. We made some decisions which are currently being enacted. They are as follows:

Our Future Together

The UCANZ Forum held at Onehunga Cooperating Parish 31 May to 2 June 2025 affirms that:

1. We acknowledge the historic concluding section of the 1984 Statement of Accord. We affirm that even in our failures God speaks to us that the unity of Christ's church on earth is His will and our hope that the unity we seek is not uniformity but a unity enriched by our diverse heritages, traditions and cultures.

This unity will be marked by an ending of prejudices and hostilities and a lifting of condemnations and barriers and sharing of one faith in God and the Trinity, a mutual recognition of one baptism, one Eucharist, and a ministry recognised by all ways of deciding and acting together.

2. The Forum and Partner personnel present affirm their on-going commitment to supporting the life of CV parishes and congregations throughout the nation.
3. We recognise the need for a broad and thorough review of UCANZ – of the very need for its existence, its purpose, procedures, and basis.
4. In the light of 3. (above), we invite the current partners – Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian – to establish a commission of nationally recognised Partner leaders (3 from each) to establish terms of reference and engage in a facilitated process to

develop a new way forward together - embracing each of their bicultural, multi-cultural, and gospel commitments .

- A. We anticipate this work to be completed within a two-year time frame, reporting to the forum of 2027 and allowing time for the implementation of changes before 1 July 2028.
- B. Regular progress feedback (minimum three times per year) will be provided to UCANZ Standing Committee and disseminated across its constituency.
- C. The UCANZ Standing Committee will initiate the process with the Partners.
- D. We invite each of the Partners to populate their portion of the commission by 1 July 2025.
- E. Terms of reference would be desirable by 1 September this year.

Supplementary Notes

- 1. There was a call for the Partners to ensure that their commission membership reflected balance – cv/denominational, lay/clergy, gender, culture, etc.
- 2. Some wanted a clearer understanding of 'nationally recognised Partner leaders'. The intent was not to populate the Commission just with the obvious leaders – it is hoped it will include those with mana who carry the necessary skill and knowledge sets appropriate to the task.
- 3. There was also a call to make sure the commission includes 'grass-roots conversations'.

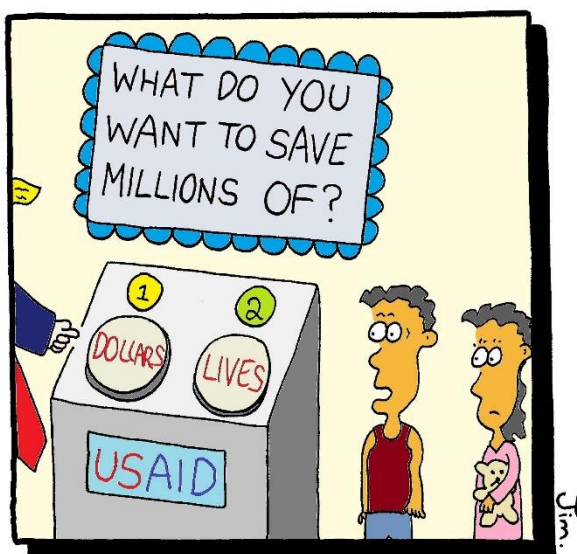
Where will this ultimately land? We do not know. Will UCANZ as an intermediary between the partners and CVs survive? We do not know. If the intent was simply to ensure the survival of UCANZ we may well have put the ferret in charge of the hen house. If, on the other hand we want our current CVs to be well supported and prosper, and if we want to see some form of long-term commitment to local ecumenical partnerships being whole-heartedly owned by the partners into the years to come, this may be the price that needs to be paid. It's too early to tell.

On a personal note, it's my hope that ultimately the partners will choose to prioritise the Kingdom of God over current denominational polity. Of course they may imagine them to be synonymous.

We'll do our best to keep you posted.



CARTOON



"Doesn't he realise that pushing the second button also pushes the first?"

Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

Our regular cartoon from Jim, that finds the funny, and sometimes not so funny, side of faith.



Tupulaga Leadership Training 2025: "Fit to Serve"

Silika Isaia (NYLO) & Penese Pio (NYLO)

The Tupulaga Leadership Training 2025 at Camp Egmont in New Plymouth, brought together more than 30 youth representatives from across the country for a powerful, faith-filled, inspiring experience.

This year's camp theme, "Fit to Serve", focused on equipping our tupulaga to be mentally, physically, and spiritually ready to lead in their youth

programmes, churches, communities, and beyond. For some attendees, it was their first ever leadership camp, and the mix of ages and backgrounds created a vibrant and enriching space for connection and growth.

The programme was led by NYLO leaders Amuimuia Penese Pio and Silika Isaia, alongside their dedicated Communications Committee: Tasi Inu, Fau Lemoa, Destiny Malatai, Moerah Feaunati, and Lahleina Feaunati. Together, the team crafted a powerful weekend of learning, worship, and leadership development. Several inspiring guest speakers led sessions that deeply resonated with the youth. Itamua Robertson and Namulauulu Josh Robertson opened with a powerful message about the true essence of leadership, sharing personal testimonies of trusting in God's call.

Opeta Amani, a former NYLO leader, unpacked what it means to be physically, mentally, and spiritually strong in leadership. Rev Paulo Ieli, our Sea, created a safe space for open conversation and learning about the wider structure and responsibilities of our Methodist Church. Michael Lemanu from Taiwi Methodist Youth encouraged the young leaders with scripture and honest conversation, reminding us that the time is now to lead boldly, just as Jesus did.

The youth also put their leadership and teamwork skills into action with team-building activities at TOPEC, which included white-water rafting, kayaking, swimming in cold waters straight from the maunga, and learning vital water safety skills. It was a challenge that truly brought out the courage, unity, and resilience in each attendee. Each morning and evening beautiful devotion and worship was lovingly led by the Communications Committee. These moments set the tone for the day, providing spiritual strength and guidance.

A highlight of the weekend was the Showcase Night, where the youth were divided into groups and asked to present the theme "Fit to Serve" through dance, drama, scripture, song, and testimony. The performances were full of heart, humour, talent, and above all faith. It was a true celebration of God's gifts in each young person. On Sunday, the group attended service at New Plymouth Samoan Methodist Church, led by Rev Falaniko Mann Taito. Our youth contributed with beautiful morning worship and a special item during the service. The congregation welcomed everyone with open arms and shared in an amazing lunch prepared by the Ekalesia from New Plymouth.

The camp ended with devotions and feedback sessions, leaving many inspired and encouraged for the journey ahead. Special thanks to the Mafutaga Tamaitai from New Plymouth for the delicious catering; some attendees joked they returned home with extra luggage ... in the form of a full belly. We are deeply thankful to God, to our leaders and speakers, hosts and to all the families and churches who supported this important event. Tupulaga Leadership Training 2025 was a blessing and a reminder that our youth are ready, willing, and fit to serve.



Wasewase Youth & Women Take Centre Stage

Iliesa Tora

The Wasewase youth and women were the focus over recent months with the annual Youth Camp over ANZAC weekend, Mother's Sunday celebrated on 11 May, and women and family the focus of the AGM.

The annual Youth Camp, held at the Foxton camp venue involved close to 200 youth, joined by their respective youth ministry leaders and councillors from the various Tabacakakaka around New Zealand.

The camp focused on issues that were relevant to youth, both in the spiritual and physical sense. Highlights included the choir singing and traditional meke challenge, held during the camp. A unanimous verdict of 'highly successful' was given for the camp, which will be held in the South Island in 2026.

Celebrating our Mothers

In May, the mothers took centre stage around the Fijian congregations in Aotearoa, during Mother's Sunday on 11 May. It was a day of celebration, recognizing all they had done. The highlight was seeing them lead all the services in the different congregations.

The annual Wasewase annual general meeting and convention was hosted by the Koroturaga Fijian congregation in Wellington at the end of May. Over three days discussions focused on the roles of mothers in the church, family and the vanua. We welcomed guest speaker, Rev Takalesu Maiwiriwiri, from the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma.

The continuing strengthening of both the youth and women's ministries of the Wasewase and the Fijian congregation is critical in ensuring the growth of the church in the work it does to win souls back to Jesus at this end time.

Critical in the sense that there are so many challenges in the world we live in that has seen a lot of harm, broken relationships and families, the result of evil rising and striking at the very foundation of the church.



CONTACT DETAILS

I welcome your feedback on content included in this publication.

Ngā mihi nui

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Christina Henderson – Campaigner for Women

Rachel Hurd, Archivist Presbyterian Research Centre

"...in all cases where men and women are engaged in the same work, equal wage should be paid for equal work." Christina Henderson to the National Council of Women, 1900.

Christina Kirk Henderson was born in 1861 in Melbourne, Australia, to Daniel and Alice (nee Connolly) Henderson. In 1863 or 1864 the family moved to Auckland. They lived in a number of communities in the North Island before eventually settling in Christchurch around 1882.

The Henderson children were brought up "in an old-fashioned Presbyterian way, 'on porridge and the Shorter Catechism.'" Christina became a

"pupil-teacher" at Ashburton School at the age of 17, attending teacher training classes before and after school and on Saturday mornings. She won a scholarship to complete her training at the Christchurch Normal School where, upon her graduation, she served as the "Relieving Headmistress" for a short time. She taught at other schools in the region, while continuing her studies, graduating from the University of New Zealand in 1891.

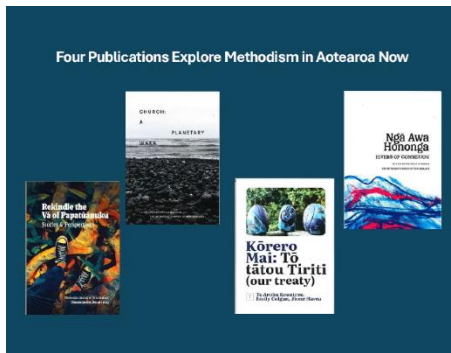
Things had become difficult for the family following the death of Christina's father in 1886 and Christina's teacher's wages helped to support the family, although as a woman she was paid only around half the wage of a male teacher. It was around this time that she also began to develop a strong interest in social issues. She felt that capitalism was unjust and that in particular it disadvantaged women. Christina was an early member of the National Council of Women, also working on the women's franchise movement in the early 1890s. She became a strong advocate for equal pay, writing to the National Council of Women in 1900. The following year, she served as the first president of the Association of Women Teachers.

She was deeply concerned for the welfare of women and children and this helped to motivate her work in the field of prohibition, where she was involved with the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) for many years. Christina also campaigned for the roles available for women to be widened, particularly within the political sphere. In 1933 her sister, Elizabeth McCombs (nee Henderson) became New Zealand's first female member of parliament.

Christina had a strong Presbyterian faith and another of her sisters, Alice Henderson, became a missionary with the New Zealand Presbyterian Church's mission in India. Christina visited Alice in India several times and was very supportive of her work, especially around the education of girls. She joined the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union (PWMU) and served as its Dominion Secretary from 1917-20 and as President from 1930 – 32. However, her most important role within the PWMU was as editor of its monthly magazine, *The Harvest Field*, a position that she held for more than 20 years.

Christina died in 1953, at the age of 92. She is remembered as a woman of great faith and principle who campaigned for the improvement of the lives of women. Her obituary in *The Harvest Field* read:

"We shall not see her like again, but we know with gratitude she rests from her labours and her works do follow her".



Four Publications Explore Methodism in Aotearoa Now

Garth Cant

Forward-thinking Methodists were responsible for transforming MCNZ the 1980s and 1990s. Three decades on, four publications capture the church now, and the issues that are of importance for a new generation. Among the magnificent Methodist Archives collections of documents and visuals is a recording, *On the Move: Towards a Bicultural Church - Made for the Bicultural Working Committee of the Methodist Church of*

New Zealand.

Created by Annie Collins and Shereen Malone, circa 1983, the recording includes live interviews and commentary with Frank Hanson, Te Rua Turner, Geoff Hill, Barry Jones, Rua Rakena, Joy Rakena, Diana Tana, and Doreen Hill. These, among others, moved us into the Treaty partnership and the bicultural journey which transformed New Zealand Methodism in the 1980s and 1990s. Three decades later we have a set of four small booklets, designed and written by a new generation. What has come about, since 1983, is visible in an exciting way. Each book is substantial; none is rambling or long winded. Each one takes us directly into the issues that are urgent for our generation. And each has its own style and ethos.

1) *Rekindle the Vā of Papatūānuku* was created by the Climate Justice Working Group in 2023. A group of 10 people met, wananga style, surrounded by the waters and sands of Tāmaki Makaurau. They were richly diverse: Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi; young and old; ordained and lay; some with academic training and some with lived experience of disability. Nurtured by whenua and moana, Mātauranga Māori and Methodist theology, and anchored by Bible study and prayer, they came together for story-telling, mindful listening and deep sharing. They recognised that climate justice and social and economic disparities are linked. Together they worked out a road-map and a ten-year programme for our Church. Publisher: Methodist Church of New Zealand, 2023. Price \$10.

2) *Church: A Planetary Waka*. In this booklet, close to 100 pages in length, 12 substantial articles consider migration and manaakitanga. The authors include Trinity Theological College staff and skilled writers from the wider church. In the words of Tara Tautari, there is a “collective weaving of a metaphorical mat”. Together they draw on Biblical resources, theological insights, the lived experience of migrants, and the realities of climate change and rising sea-levels. The authors bring a range of skills and diverse cultural insights. Each chapter, impressive in its own right, makes an important contribution to the finished mat. Publisher: Methodist Church of New Zealand, 2024. Price \$10.

3) *Kōrero Mai: Tō tātou Tiriti*. It is “our Treaty” and a very different style of booklet. The contributions are much shorter but no less powerful. Trinity Theological College authors have invited the guests and “set the table”: parishes, and study groups within parishes, are invited to engage with each of the 14 authors in kōrero and talanoa. We can each work out how Te Tiriti enables us to address environmental degradation and climate change in our own place. Publisher: Takeikaupē/ Methodist Church of New Zealand, 2024. Price \$10.

4) *Nga Awa Hononga: Rivers of Connexion* is a great place to start If you are keen to understand New Zealand Methodism now. Our identity and our mission is shaped around Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We made a decision in 1983 to embark on a bicultural journey. Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi work in partnership. This book, carefully crafted by Tara Tautari, is lively and fast moving. It contains vivid windows into the journey since 1983, where we are now, and contains visions for our future.

Publisher: Methodist Church of New Zealand, 2024. Price \$10.



Rural Oceania Together in Talanoa

Robyn McPhail

Rural church ministry comes with unique challenges. A conference held in a small Fijian village in late May brought a Pasifika understanding, and a gospel lens, to talanoa around issues of shared concern.

A group of 50 people with an interest in rural church ministry

gathered for the International Rural Churches Association (IRCA) Oceania Conference this year. The Talanoa amongst the group cast a Gospel lens on issues of shared concern; asking, "Where is Jesus in this?"

International Rural Churches Association (IRCA) Oceania developed from Trans-Tasman rural ministry gatherings which have always prioritised sharing stories of being rural church and the issues we face. Participants - majority non-European, from Pacific Islands, Australia, and Aotearoa - met in Namoli Village, a traditional village within Lautoka city, centred around the Namoli Methodist Church. In Nelle Morton's words, we "heard one another to speech", on topics of vital and distressing concern to us all. Our task was to bring faith to the issues, asking "where is Jesus in this?" and "what scriptures feed into our response?"

Rev Sepiuta Hala'apiapi, General Secretary of the Fiji Council of Churches and Deputy Moderator of the Pacific Conference of Churches set the scene with an overview of issues across the region, leading into sharing stories in small groups.

In talanoa on **seasonal worker schemes** in Australia and New Zealand, attendees heard how Pasifika people are sometimes recruited to work for long hours at a set rate of pay. A strain is put on families with a parent away for more than half the year, and better orientation and support for workers and families are needed. Supportive local churches are helping, with scope for developing a relationship between the home church and church in Australia or New Zealand. There was a suggestion we could introduce chaplains to support and advocate for the workers.

Drugs have become a major concern, causing an increase in violence and robbery. Children are being used for deliveries, and cartels are targeting the Islands as a bridge to get drugs into NZ and Australia. The Fiji Commissioner of Police has sought the help of the churches, asking leaders to preach about the harm caused, with emphasis on the stewardship of the body as the Temple of God.

Seria Vinakadina from Youth with a Mission Fiji, told how their teams standing outside night clubs often meet people drunk or high on drugs. The teams counsel them and keep them safe, reminding them of their Christian roots, their responsibilities to their families, and most importantly, of Christ's love for them.

Introducing the topic of **self-determination**, Ringatu tohunga Tuhi Taoho spoke about Tūhoetanga, with Tūhoe's goal of being self-governing and enhancing the lives

of the people. Talanoa groups heard about colonisation across the region, continuing in several countries. Even where countries have achieved independence, there are lingering effects, with economic colonisation becoming the issue.

An example was shared at Votua village, near Ba, two days later. Church elders told of an agreement to allow mining of rich black sands, made 21 years ago without adequate information or advice. This has damaged their traditional ocean food source, and the promised royalties and community infrastructure have not eventuated. Legal redress feels a bridge too far, but they are clear they will not be renewing the agreement when it ends in nine years, no matter the enticement.

Aboriginal elder Uncle Jack Harradine shared his inspirational story, speaking of his life prior to meeting Jesus and then the work he and his wife Lill are doing amongst their people in South Australia to reduce violence and abuse in relationships.

Before group talanoa on **climate change**, Jim Spall shared farm and church experience of Cyclone Gabrielle, the event and the response, along with readiness for future climate challenges. A Pacific overview from Cliff Bird told of the loss of arable land with sea levels rising. Relocation to higher ground because of the increase in tsunami and excessive king tides can mean dislocation, especially when the move is to another country.

Modern day slavery is a reality in our region. In NZ and Australia, work contracts exist that require people to work long hours on minimal wages. Workers are denied Union access, and tied to employment designated on their visa. Contracts are often broken by employers, with any complaints risking future work prospects. This is a difficult area to speak truth to power without harming the individuals involved.

Martha Kaluatman inspired us with her church work in Vanuatu in relation to **safety and well-being of women and children**. Hers were “stories of change” in which men receive sound bible teaching about relationships and their responsibilities, and self-esteem is built amongst the women. Talanoa groups discussed the challenges of keeping families safe and coping with the effects of global culture.

The kiwis in attendance made a commitment to share resources, liturgy and advice on best practice for responding effectively when faced with climate emergencies (knowing these will continue to happen). Building connections with seasonal workers and those on working visas is a shared plan of action, and supporting them, e.g. lobbying for visa alternations that would allow families to visit, reducing the isolation of the workers and the damage to family relationships.

A stand-out of the conference was the way we quickly became family together and a gathering of equals, fellow travellers on the rural church journey. The hard work beforehand paid off in spades, with leadership simply being about giving space for the Spirit to lead us forward. Ten people put their hands up to be an ongoing “working group” and we are assured that the IRCA Oceania network is alive and growing.

A second stand-out was the hospitality we received from the traditional village which hosted us. Just as on marae, we were told we were no longer strangers. We engaged fully in the traditional formalities, including the gifting of household supplies in farewell, along with a tabua (whale’s tooth). Such was their respect for us, we were stunned to receive a whale’s tooth in return.

This is now in the care of the Methodist Church in Fiji and remains a tohu for the family of IRCA Oceania.